PLANTING IDEAS • BEAUTIFUL GARDENS • EXPERT ADVICE

FESTIVAL TICKETS NOW ON SALE PAGE 8

GARDENS ILLUSTRATED

Discover beautiful new

Hellebores

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Perfect gifts for gardeners

Nature-inspired gift wrapping

Forcing bulbs for pretty indoor displays

Design ideas for tree houses

54 of the best garden plants for winter

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editor's letter

Any plant that helps brighten winter days is good in my book. Hellebores, also called Lenten roses, are iconic flowers with cheerful blooms that are perfect for lifting the spirits even in the bleakest weather. Over the past couple of decades there have been many new introductions, however, some of the more highly bred ones have lost the delicate charm and sweetly nodding habit of the species. One of my favourites is *H. torquatus*, a dark-headed, rather wild-looking beauty, so I was interested to discover that it has played a part in Lorna Jones's breeding programme of hellebore hybrids at Hertfordshire Hellebores. Turn to page 52 for 26 of her favourites. The best Christmas presents are invariably those that are chosen with great thoughtfulness, and what better way to package them than with beautiful, handmade wrappings inspired by nature? Ali Bell (former designer on *Gardens Illustrated*) offers some lovely ideas with a selection of presents wrapped especially for us, see page 46. If you're looking for presents for the gardeners in your life, or want to give someone close to you a gentle nudge in the right present-buying direction, turn to page 17 for some of our favourite things. Forcing bulbs is a lovely way to ensure you have plants indoors over winter. Designer Hannah Gardner has put together some exceptionally pretty displays and written a step-by-step guide on how to create them. I hope this issue offers a few ideas to make winter days more enjoyable and sincerely wish you all a very happy Christmas.

Juliet

GARDENS
ILLUSTRATED
Hellebores

Save money when you **subscribe to the digital edition** – see page 32

Try some creative ways to wrap your Christmas presents using nature's bounty as inspiration, page 46.

Ideas for forcing bulbs for pretty indoor displays over winter, page 74.

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JASON INGRAM

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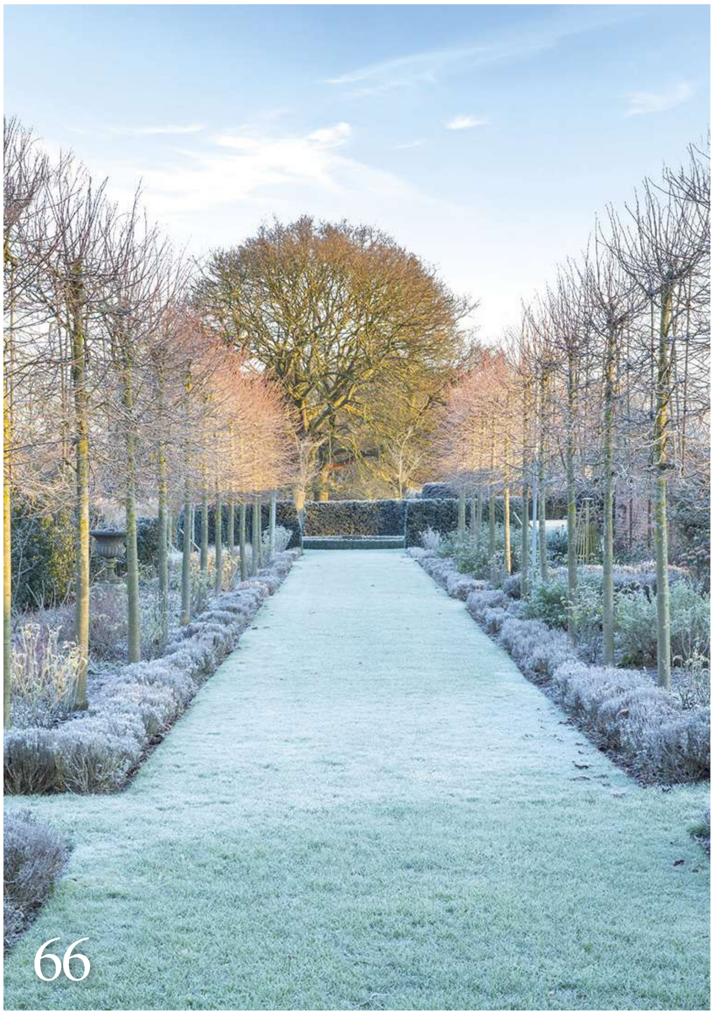
DECEMBER 2016



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Photograph by
Rachel Warne

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MARIANNE MAJERUS, JASON INGRAM

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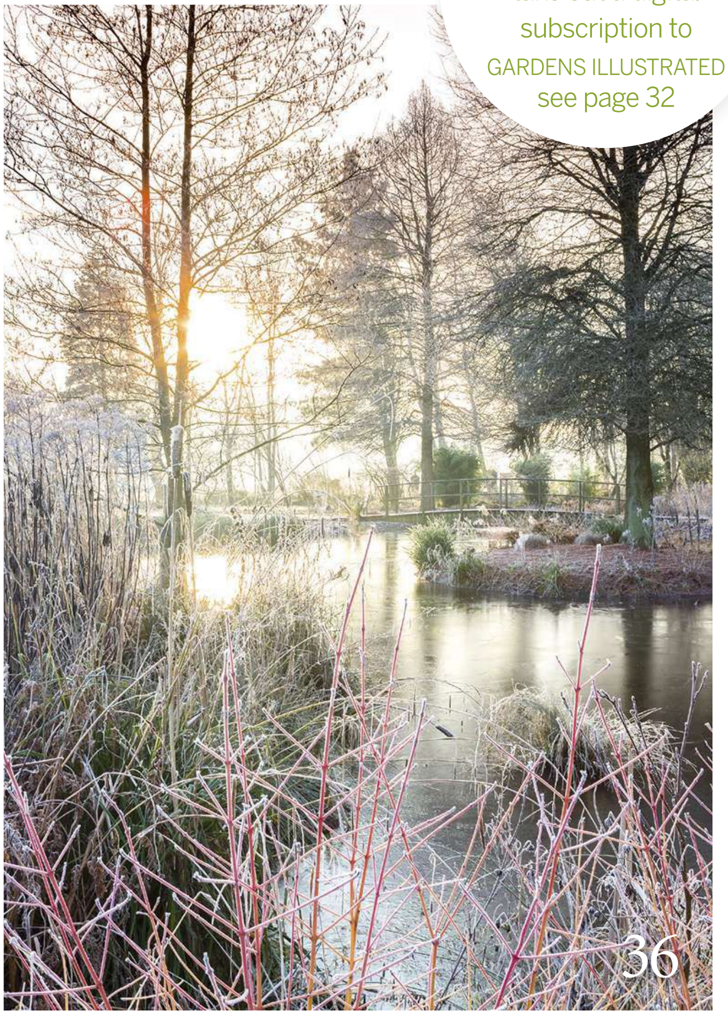

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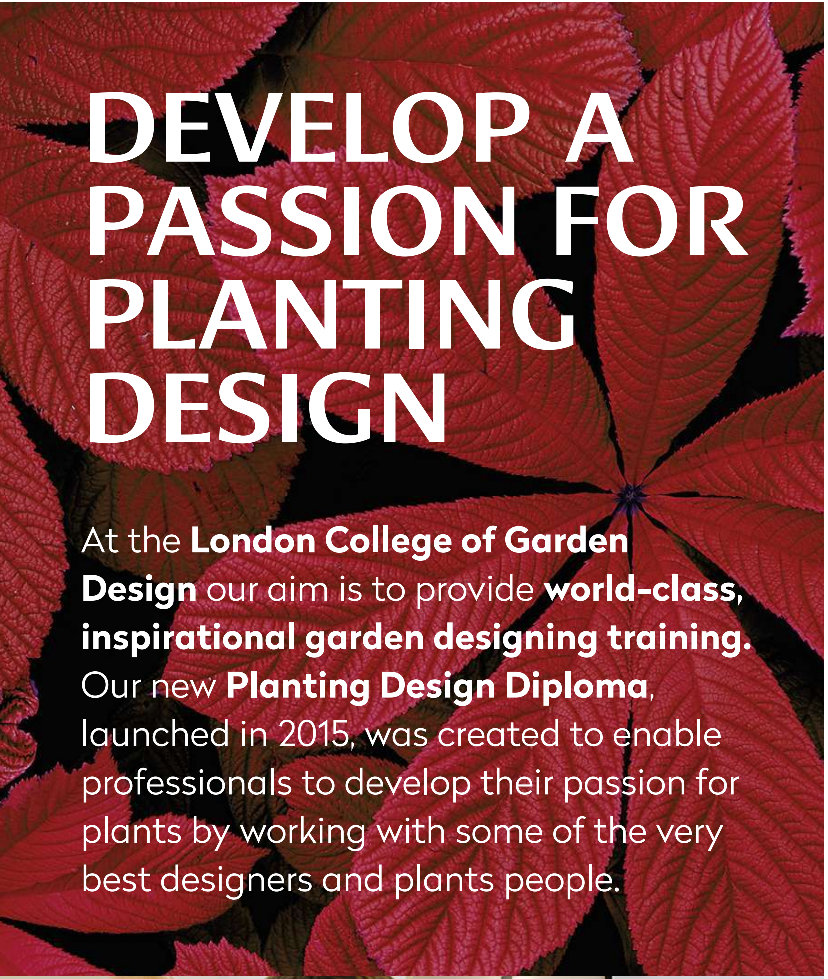
* Competition open to UK residents only.



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The course is led by **Andrew Fisher Tomlin, designer and Chartered Horticulturist**, and we are fortunate to have **some incredible specialist lecturers** including Rosy Hardy, Neil Lucas of Knoll Gardens, Tony Kirkham from the **Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew** and Nigel Dunnett from the **University of Sheffield**. Designer tutors include James Basson, Jo Thompson, Paul Hervey-Brookes, Anne-Marie Powell, Carolyn Willitts and Amanda Patton.

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RACHEL WARNE

JINNY BLOM

Jinny is a garden and landscape designer and writer. Nothing gives her greater pleasure than a quiet day's immersion in reading about plants. On page 93 she takes a rare break from work and takes pleasure in reviewing her top desert island books for *Gardens Illustrated*.

"I loved writing this feature. Time spent rummaging about in books is never wasted so it was a rare treat."

RICHARD BLOOM

Richard's award-winning photography regularly appears in many UK and foreign garden and lifestyle magazines. On page 36 he returns to his father Adrian Bloom's garden, Foggy Bottom in Norfolk, where he began his first forays into garden photography over 20 years ago.

"Foggy Bottom is a remarkable garden with year-round interest and such a variety of plants: there's always something to inspire."

HANNAH GARDNER

Hannah is a garden designer and head gardener of an organic flower farm in Wiltshire. A committed plantswoman, she escapes when she can to enjoy and study plants in situ. On page 74 she coaxes some of her choice bulbs into early flower and styles them for indoor displays.

"Styling and growing for this feature was quite a challenge, but all the more rewarding for it. I love this first breakaway from winter."

HOWARD SOOLEY

KENDRA WILSON

A writer and window shopper, Kendra has put together our six-page, festive gift guide on page 17. She is a contributor to *Gardenista: The Definitive Guide to Stylish Outdoor Spaces*, a new book from the editors of the Gardenista website, listing classic essentials for gardeners.

"I've included the serious kit that gardeners want, while adding frivolous things that they didn't know they wanted, until now."

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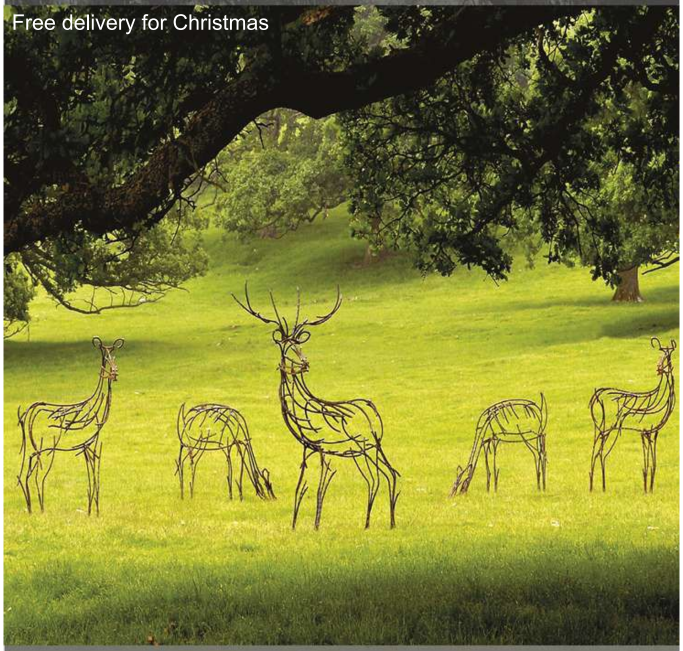

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Stepping out of the school buildings, on to the terraced lawns, you'll find our shopping marquee selling a carefully chosen selection of plants from specialist nurseries, and gardening goods from some of our favourite companies and artisan makers. You will also have the opportunity to book a free session with expert horticulturists and designers about your own garden queries at our plant and design clinics.

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Speakers for 2017 include: James Alexander-Sinclair, Jinny Blom, Val Bourne, Helen Dillon, Nigel Dunnett, Marina Christopher, Annie Guilfoyle, Andy Hamilton, Mary Keen, Noël Kingsbury, Roy Lancaster, Arne Maynard, Jekka McVicar, Ann-Marie Powell, Sarah Raven, Charlie Ryrie, Troy Scott Smith, Cleve West

For booking and details of all events go to

gardensfestival.com or call 0871 230 7156

calls cost 13p per minute plus network extras. Lines open 24 hours a day.

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NEWS COMPILED BY ALYS HURN

RICHARD BLOOM / GAPPHOTOS

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Few things mark the start of Christmas better than filling your home with the scent of a real, freshly cut Christmas tree. But if you're worried about the environmental impact a cut tree may have, remember that Christmas trees are grown as a crop and not taken from forests, so once this year's trees have been harvested their site will be replanted with more trees. However, you should try to ensure you buy a tree that's been grown locally. Not only will this reduce its carbon footprint, but it will also be fresher and in better condition than a tree that's been transported and stored. If possible, try to buy direct from a member of the British Christmas Tree Growers' Association or from a specialist retailer in your local area. For details and advice visit bctga.co.uk and see our buyer's guide at gardensillustrated.com

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EYE SPY

Keep an eye on wildlife in your garden this winter with the vision kit from Hyndight. The kit includes a lightweight, water-resistant, wide-angle camera and wireless monitor, plus two flush mounts and an antenna set. Rechargeable batteries power both camera and monitor. $499 each from hyndsightvision.com

INNOVATIVE DESIGN

Slip of a thing

If you're tired of constantly changing shoes every time you nip into the garden, these snuggly slippers from Mahabis could be the answer. The soft slipper, has sculpted wool lining and a detachable hard sole that is suitable for outdoor wear. The hard sole comes in a range of colours and can be slipped on and off in an instant. Slippers cost £79 a pair and additional soles £15 a pair. **mahabis.com**

NEW ROSE

Full of character

With its large, lilac-pink flowers, deep-green foliage and heavenly scent, this romantic rose is sure to take pride of place in many rose beds next summer. *Rosa* 'Mr Darcy', from John Scarman Roses & Gardens Consultancy, is a new, upright, shrub rose that grows to 1.25m and has proven disease resistance. Bare root plants, available from October to March, cost £18.50. **scarman-roses.com**

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Garden Tags, a new social networking app aimed at gardeners, lets you share photos of your plants and garden, and helps you seek advice from a community of fellow garden lovers and experts. The app was launched in February of this year and already has a user-generated encyclopedia of more than 13,000 plants and a plant-care task list. Download for free from the App store and Google Play. **gardentags.com**

GIFT IDEA

Nature's bounty

Still looking for the perfect gift for the bird lover in your life. This Bird Gift Box from Boxwild costs £30 and includes high-quality birdseed, two feeders and a coco fat ball. Subscription boxes are also available, starting at £12 a month, with 50p from all box sales donated to UK wildlife charities. **boxwild.com**

Diary

Wreath workshop at Hestercombe Gardens.

- **Holly Trail**

As home to a National Collection of holly, RHS Rosemoor is great garden to visit at Christmas. Follow the holly trail and keep an eye out for the 160 different types on display. 10am-5pm. £9.85. RHS Rosemoor, Great Torrington, Devon EX28 8PH. Tel 08452 658072, rhs.org.uk/rosemoor

- **An Evening with Carol Klein**

Gardener's World stalwart, and *Gardens Illustrated* contributing editor, Carol Klein talks about her gardening career. 1 December, 7-8pm. £17. 66 Royal Hospital Road, Chelsea, London SW3 4HS. Tel 020 7352 5646, chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk

- **Candelit Shopping Event**

Shop for gifts and find inspiration for festive decorations while enjoying Christmas carols, mince pies and mulled wine. 1 December, 6-9pm. Petersham Nurseries, Church Lane, off Petersham Road, Richmond, Surrey TW10 7AB. Tel 020 8940 3230, petershamnurseries.com

- **Winter Fair**

Find Christmas trees, seasonal shrubs, local preserves and woodcraft at Harborough Nurseries Winter Fair. 3-4 December, 10am-5pm. The Thorne, Guestling, Hastings, East Sussex TN35 4LU. Tel 01424 814220.

- **Terrarium Workshop**

Learn the skills you need to create your own miniature garden under glass in this one-day workshop with Emma Sibley. 9 December, 10am-1pm. £65. Architectural Plants, Stane Street, North Heath, Pulborough, West Sussex RH20 1DJ. Tel 01798 879213, architecturalplants.com

- **Willow Weaving Course**

Learn the art of willow weaving, and create natural decorations for Christmas, at Arley Hall in Cheshire. 13 December, 10am-4pm. £54. Arley Hall and Gardens, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 6NA. Tel 01565 777353, arleyhallandgardens.com

- **Wreath and Garland Workshop**

Join florist Sarah Pepper for a workshop on how to make a Christmas wreath using fresh, seasonal foliage. 18 December, 10am-12.30pm. £28. Hestercombe Gardens, Cheddon Fitzpaine, Taunton, Somerset TA2 8LG. Tel 01823 413923, hestercombe.com

WREATH IMAGE: PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRITT WILLOUGHBY DYER. STYLING KRISTY RAMAGE

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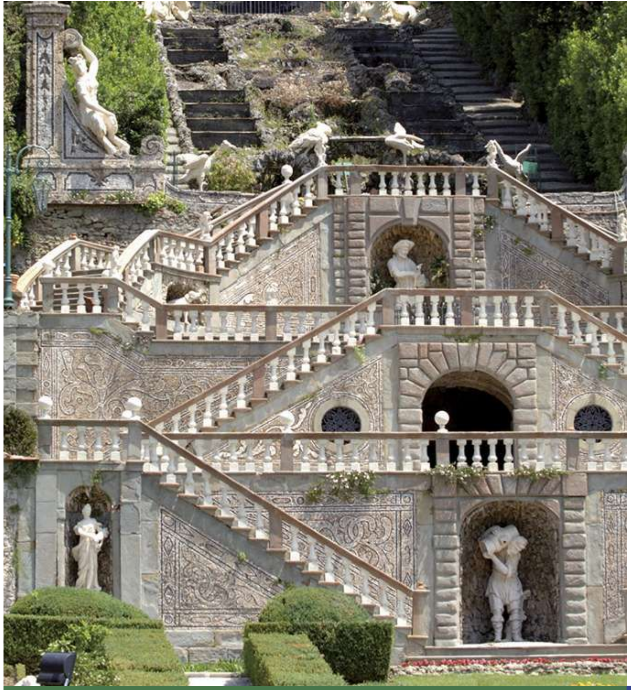
VENETO
Visits to: Villa Barbarigo, Villa Emo, Villa Pisani, Giardino Giusti, Villa Rizzardi
2017: 7 Jun, 6 Sep
From £2,240 per person



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Gifts for gardeners

A selection of stylish, practical and
decorative Christmas gift ideas to tempt
even the most seasoned of gardeners

PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM** GIFT SELECTION **KENDRA WILSON**

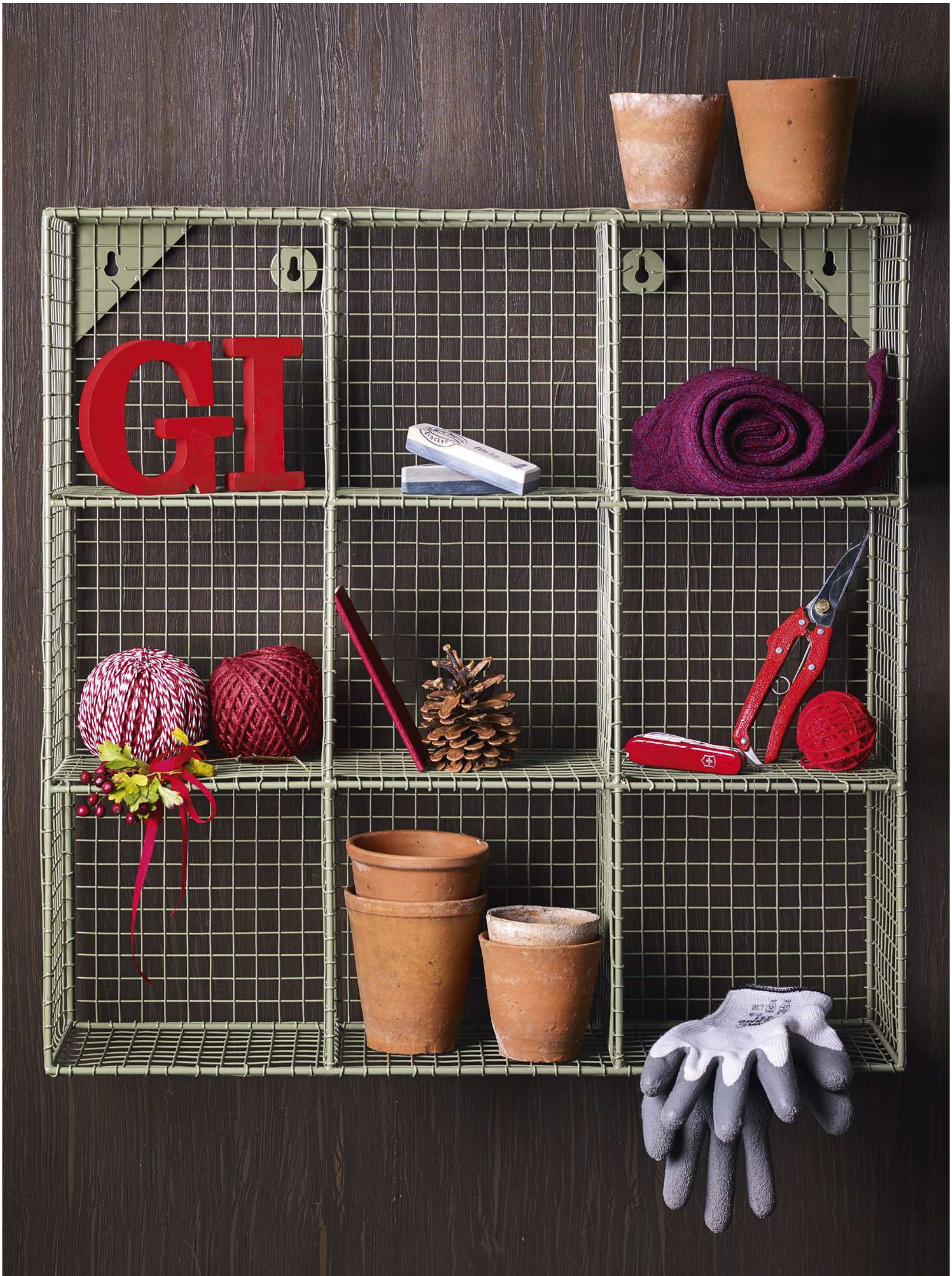
Harvesting bag, £125, Rural Kind in collaboration with Charlott Fletcher.

STYLING BY DAVID GRENHAM, JULIET ROBERTS, ALYS HURN

Above left Swiss plastic watering can, £12.50, Manufactum.
Middle Three round basket trays, £15, The Foodie Bugle. **Right** Musca copper scoop-shaped trowel, £39, Burford.

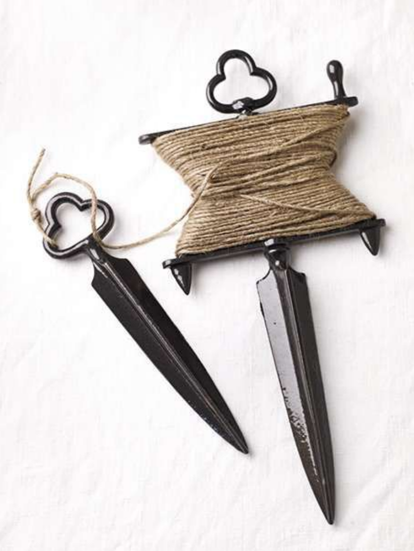
Above left Copper snail fence, £20, Manufactum.
Middle Welsh blanket in ember, £260, Tinsmiths. **Right** Japanese hand rake, £10.80, Great Dixter Shop.

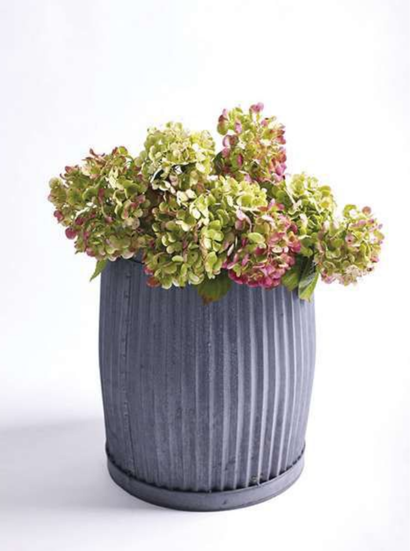
Above left Sleeper bench, £59.99, Crocus; rarebreed sheepskin, £79, Tinsmiths.
Middle Okatsune secateurs, from £38, Niwaki. **Right** Brass turned sprinkler, £67, Manufactum.

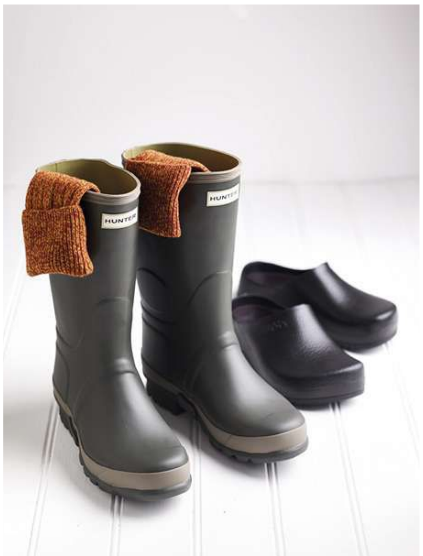


Grid wall unit in Crocus green, £49.99, Crocus. **Top row from middle** Belgian whetstone, £13.99, Great Dixter Shop; Charnwood wool wellington boot socks in rosehip, £18, Pantherella for Scott-Nichol. **Middle** Moleskine cahier pocket journal cranberry red, £5.95 (for set of 3), Moleskine; compact red knife, £25.96, Swiss Tool. **Bottom** Showa thermal gardening gloves, £7, Special Plants. All other items stylist's own.

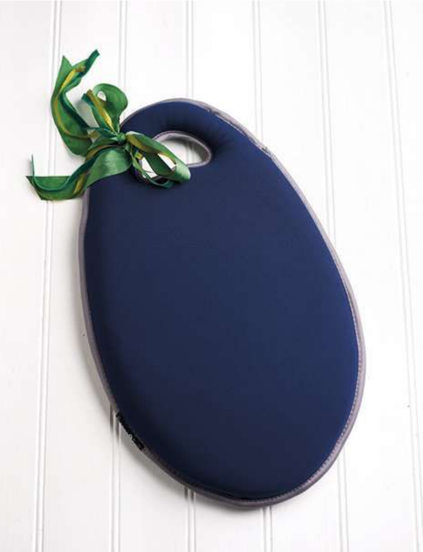
Brass Byrne table planter, £32, Rowen & Wren; flower snips small, £5.95, Sarah Raven.

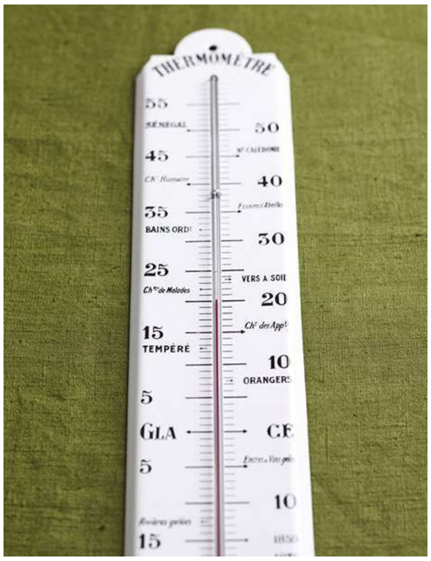





HUNTER
HUNTER

Above left Garden line, £25, Nutscene. **Middle** Small Vence planter, £42, Garden Trading. **Right** Gardener wellington boots, £60, Hunter; Charnwood wool wellington socks in russet, £18, Pantherella for Scott-Nichol; Super-Birki clogs, £44.95, Birkenstock.

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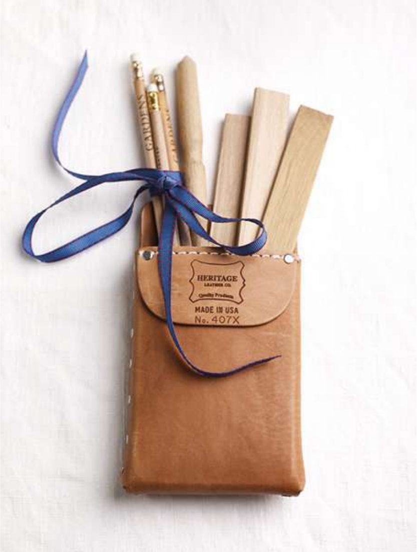
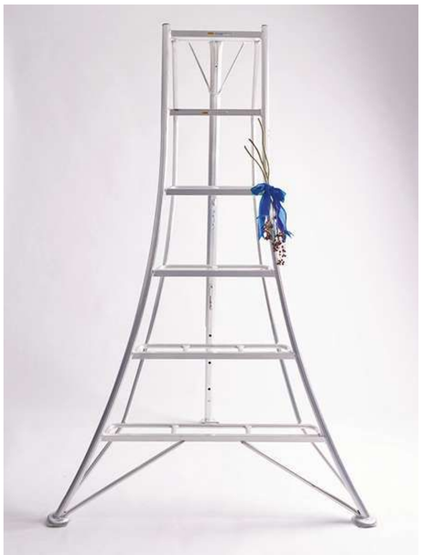
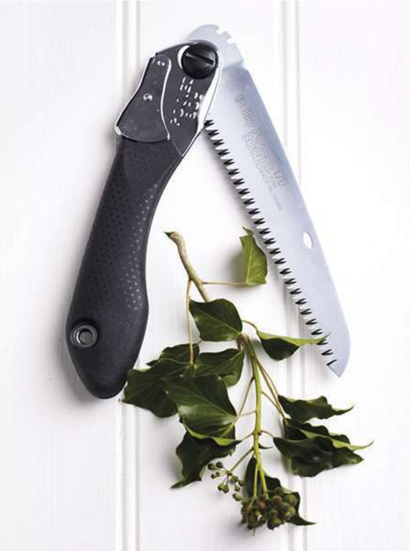
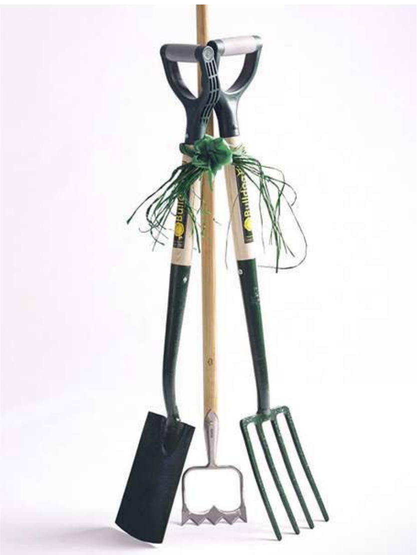

HERITAGE
MADE IN USA
No. 407X

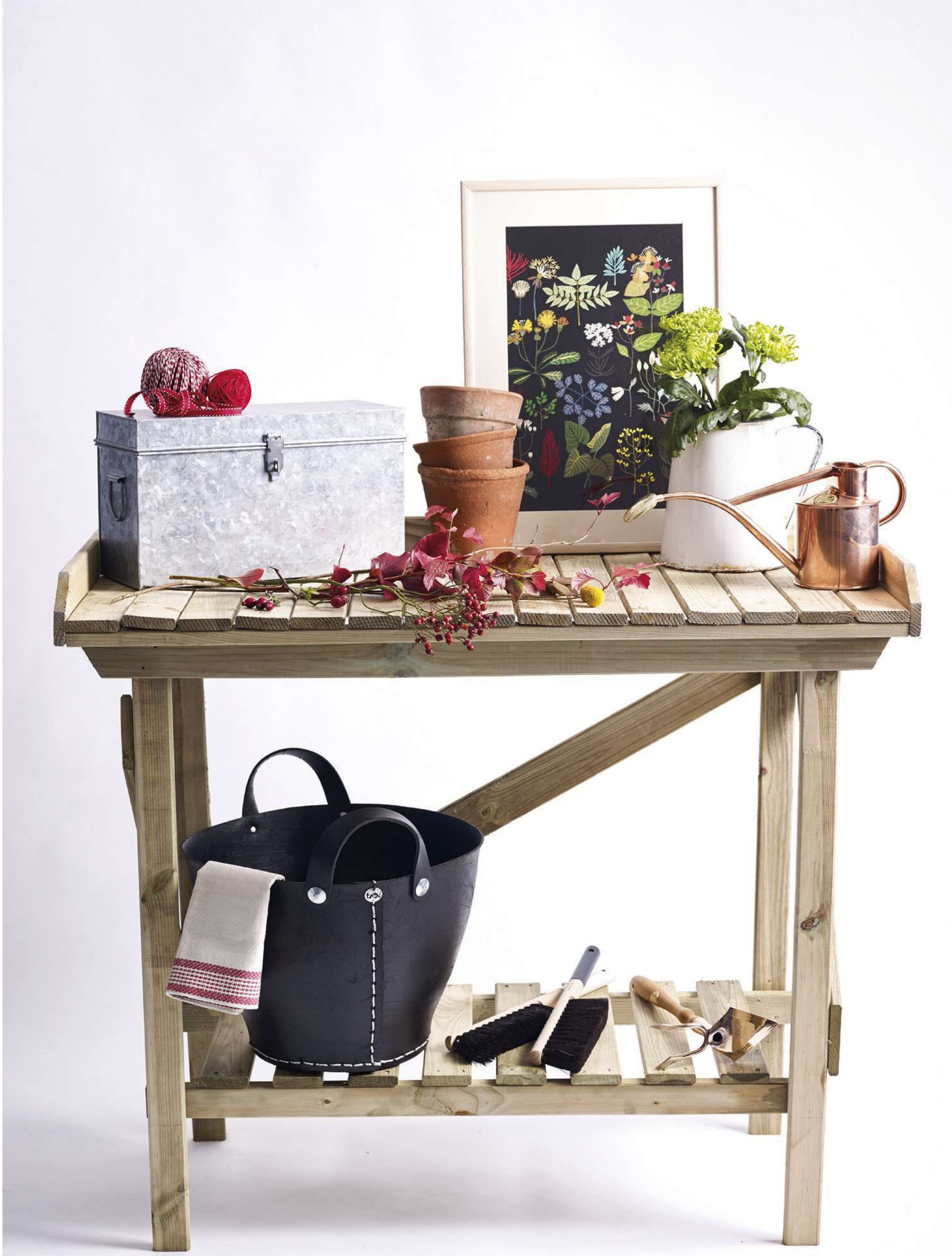
Above left Gardening kneeler in navy, £14.95, Sarah Raven.
Middle Large thermometer, £46, Labour and Wait. **Right** Heritage leather no.407 pouch, £23.99, Great Dixter Shop.







Above left 6ft Niwaki tripod ladder, £219, Niwaki. **Middle** Silky Pocket Boy 170 saw, £32.99, Great Dixter Shop.
Right Evergreen border spade and fork, £30 each, Bulldog Tools; Sneeboer Royal Dutch hoe, £54.95, Harrod Horticultural.



Potting bench, £44.99, Crocus. **Top shelf** Galvanised seed trunk, £39.99, Crocus; plant study poster print (frame not included), £20, Brie Harrison; copper watering can, £49.99, Haws. **Lower shelf** Recycled tire trug, £28, Hen & Hammock; black and white handled, horse hair brooms, 210 kr each, Iris Hantverk; Phoenix hoe, £43, Implementations. All other items stylist's own.

• For details of all stockists turn to page 102.

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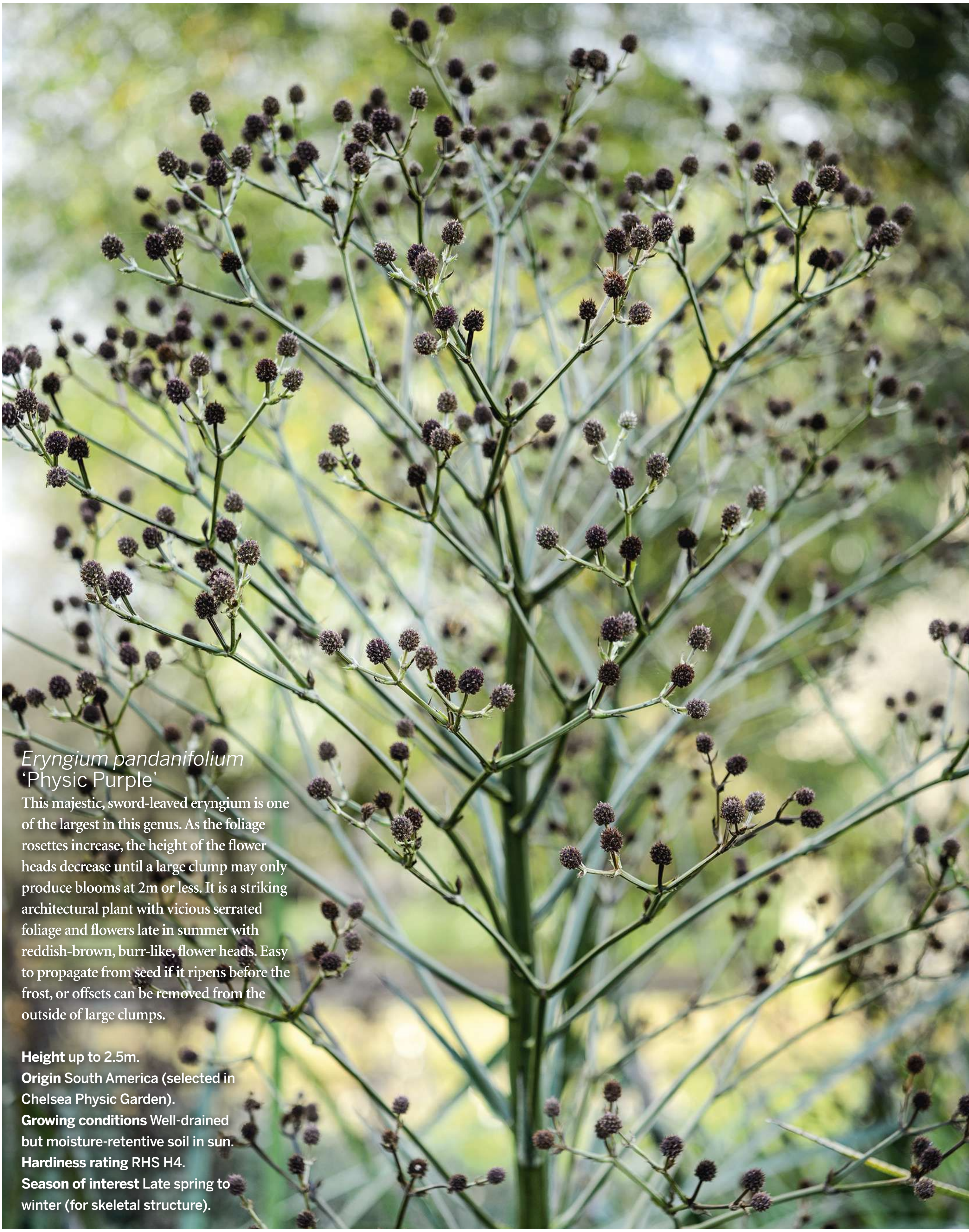


Eryngium pandanifolium ‘Physic Purple’

This majestic, sword-leaved eryngium is one of the largest in this genus. As the foliage rosettes increase, the height of the flower heads decrease until a large clump may only produce blooms at 2m or less. It is a striking architectural plant with vicious serrated foliage and flowers late in summer with reddish-brown, burr-like, flower heads. Easy to propagate from seed if it ripens before the frost, or offsets can be removed from the outside of large clumps.

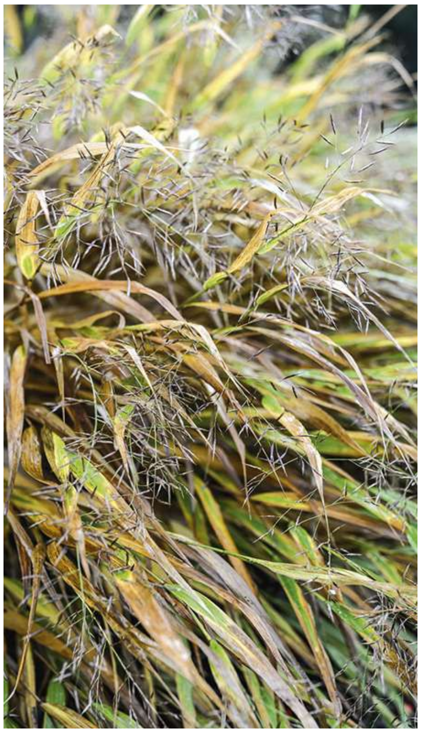
Height up to 2.5m.
Origin South America (selected in Chelsea Physic Garden).
Growing conditions Well-drained but moisture-retentive soil in sun.
Hardiness rating RHS H4.
Season of interest Late spring to winter (for skeletal structure).

Marina Christopher is a plantswoman who owns Phoenix Perennial Plants in Hampshire*.

December plants

In the last of her year-long series, Marina selects some much-loved favourites, chosen to bring colour, form and scent to winter gardens

WORDS MARINA CHRISTOPHER PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM



Hakonechloa macra

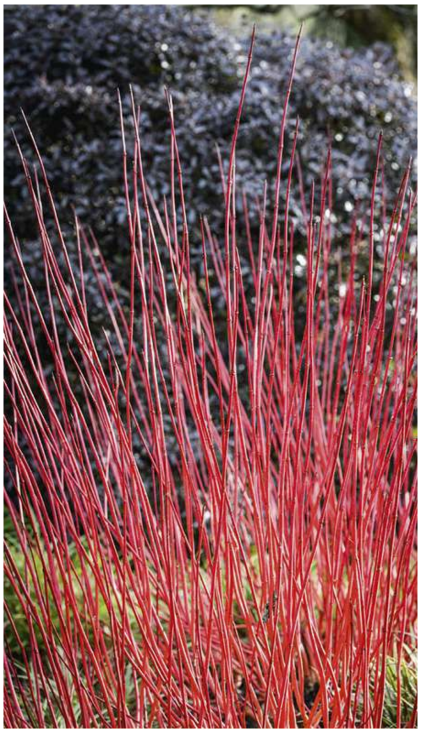
In naturalistic plantings, grasses play a major part in providing strong, architectural skeletons in winter, acting as templates for spiders' webs and the icy clutches of hoar frost. Smaller in all its parts, this grass seems diminutive when compared to *Miscanthus* or *Panicum* but it adds an element to the winter scene in a different way. By winter the grass blades have turned sere but remain attached to the stems, so a sea of Hakone grass rustles and moves in the slightest breeze with the skeletal flower plumes casting a rich tracery above them.

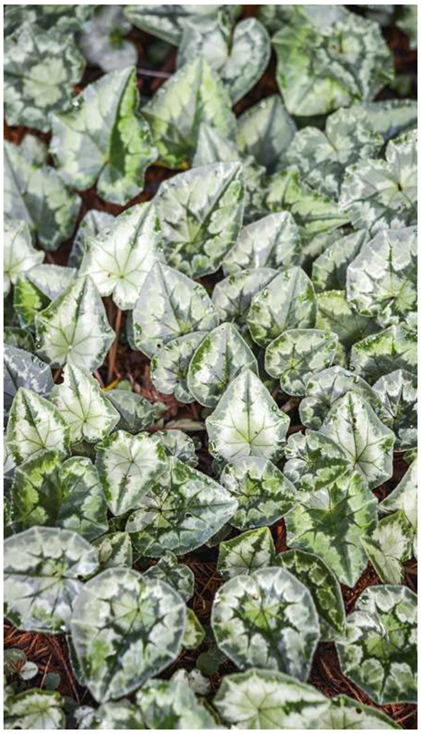
Height 30cm.
Origin Japan.
Growing conditions Moisture-retentive soil; sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness rating RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.
Season of interest Late spring to winter.

Cornus alba 'Sibirica'

A glimpse of colour other than the buffs and browns of skeletal herbaceous foliage is a welcome sight during the winter months and the stems of this dogwood supply it in spades. Vibrant, fiery-red stems glow in wintry sunlight providing a striking focal point. To achieve the best display, the woody stems should be pruned hard back to a few inches above ground in spring every year, after which a thicket of strong, whippy stems will grow during the summer to provide the magical winter fireworks once the leaves have fallen. AGM†.

Height 3m.
Origin Siberia to Manchuria, North Korea.
Growing conditions Most soils; sun or shade – stem colour not so good in shade.
Hardiness rating RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.
Season of interest Late autumn to spring.





Cyclamen hederifolium

In late summer and early autumn flowers emerge on short stems from the rounded flattened corms; white, pink, deep-pink or almost purple, butterfly-like blooms unfurl with reflexed petals darker at the base where they attach to a circular disc. A few weeks later the leaves appear, often with beautiful silver and green markings that persist long after the flowers have finished. Propagation is by seed. This is enclosed in round, brown seedheads on tightly coiled stems, which are dispersed by ants that lust after the fatty white substance attached to the seed.

Height 10cm.
Origin Southern France, Greece, Turkey.
Growing conditions Humus-rich, well-drained soil; dappled shade.
Hardiness rating RHS H5, USDA 4a-9b.
Season of interest Late summer to spring.

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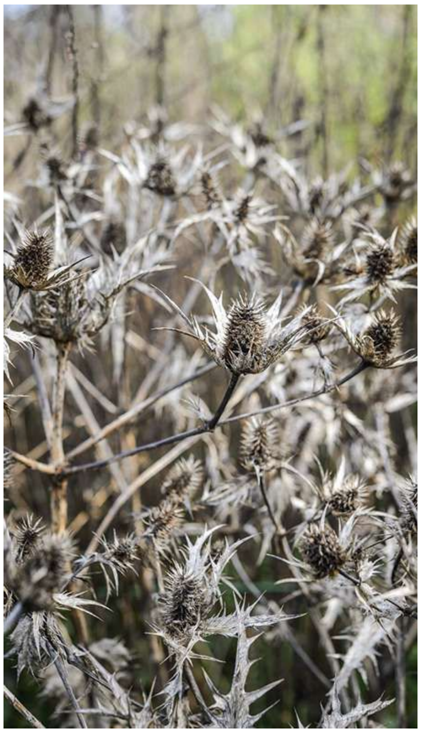
*Open by appointment only. Email marina@phoenixperennialplants.co.uk for details. †Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.



Eryngium giganteum 'Silver Ghost'

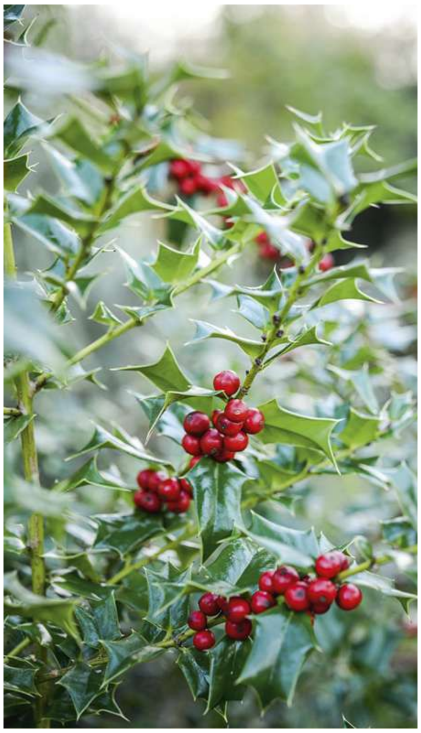
This biennial sea holly is a form of *E. giganteum* but with more silvery foliage and a smaller cone. In its first year it produces a rosette of foliage and only produces a flowering stem the following year or sometimes in its third season, but reliably seeds around given suitable conditions. The flowers are beloved by bees and the architectural seedheads persist into winter providing sustenance for a wide range of insects and small mammals from their nutritious seeds. AGM.

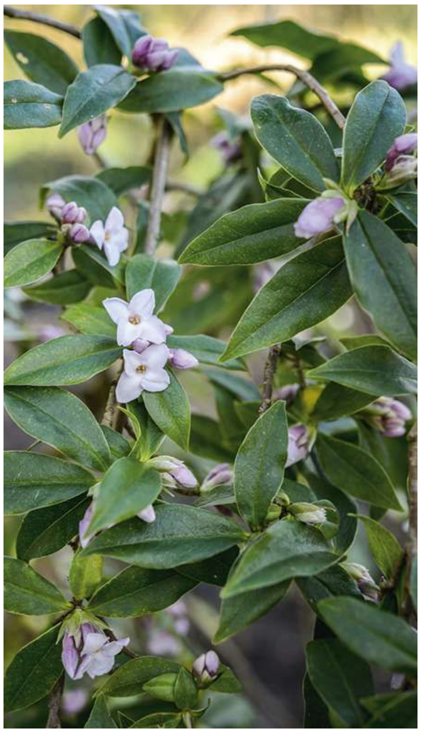
Height 60-75cm.
Origin Turkey (collected by Martyn Rix).
Growing conditions Well-drained soil; full sun.
Hardiness rating RHS H7, USDA 4a-7b.
Season of interest Late spring to winter.

Ilex cornuta x pernyi

Colourful berries are a welcome sight during the winter months and this attractive, small-leaved holly produces an abundant crop of red berries clustered along the branches. There are more than 400 species of holly, and hybridisers have made many interspecific crosses resulting in some excellent hybrids. This cross is between two Asian species and is a female cultivar so it produces fruit providing a welcome source of nutrition for birds and small mammals. Hollies are unpalatable to deer and make a good evergreen stock-proof hedge.

Height 4-6m.
Origin Central and western China.
Growing conditions Moisture-retentive soil with humus; sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness rating RHS H4, USDA 7a-9b.
Season of interest Autumn to spring.





Daphne bholua 'Jacqueline Postill'

In the cold winter months scent is a bonus for our senses. Few plants rival daphnes in providing such a strong, sweet fragrance. This very hardy semi-evergreen or evergreen shrub was raised by Hillier Nurseries propagator Alan Postill in 1982 from a seedling from *D. bholua* var. *glacialis* 'Gurkha' and named after his wife. It is pollinated by bees, usually bumblebees as they are more likely to be on the wing during the colder months of the year. It flowers from mid to late winter. AGM.

Height 2m.
Origin Himalayas.
Growing conditions Well-drained, moisture-retentive soil; dappled shade.
Hardiness rating RHS H4.
Season of interest Autumn to spring.

Places to visit

December is a good time to go out and see the bones of a garden and get ideas on what to grow for winter interest in your own plot.

One of the great winter gardens is **The Sir Harold Hillier Gardens and Arboretum** in Hampshire, which holds 11 National Collections including *Cornus.* In winter daphnes fill the air with fragrance along with *Sarcococca* species and witch hazels. Hollies and skimmias provide evergreen foliage and bright berries, while bamboos and dogwoods supply colourful stems. A walk along the millennium border reveals those herbaceous perennials that contribute to the winter season with interesting foliage and seedheads. Jermyns Lane, Ampfield, Romsey, Hampshire SO51 0QA. Tel 01794 368787, hilliergardens.org.uk

Sir Harold Hillier Gardens.

CAROLE DRAKE / GAP PHOTOS

Anglesey Abbey near Cambridge has a lovely winter garden with plants selected to provide scent, foliage texture and striking

Phyllostachys aureosulcata f. *aureocaulis*

This golden-caned, smooth-sheathed bamboo makes a wonderful specimen, clumping up vigorously with ever thicker canes as the plant matures and the underground rhizomes increase. The canes have deep grooves on the sides where the drooping leaves emerge and a thicket of this bamboo can provide an effective screen in a relatively short period. With the play of light through the canes, it is easy to see how wildlife can be effectively camouflaged when hunting in the wild.

Height 8m plus.
Origin China.
Growing conditions Moisture-retentive soil; sun or partial shade.
Hardiness rating RHS H5, USDA 5a-10b.
Season of interest Year round.

Ruscus aculeatus

I was introduced to this botanical curiosity – its leaves are actually flattened stems known as cladodes that have small flowers appearing in the middle of them in spring – while studying botany. I met it in the flesh as an underwhelming specimen hidden in an overgrown shrubbery. I was unimpressed with the dull-green, prickly leaves but the red berries were attractive. Since then I have seen specimens grown in sun with vibrant and prolific berries and glossy evergreen foliage. Guess where I'd plant it?

Height 90cm.
Origin Southern Europe.
Growing conditions Well-drained, moisture-retentive soil; can tolerate shade.
Hardiness rating RHS H4, USDA 7a-10b.
Season of interest Winter for berries.

Cephalaria litvinovii

The teasel family is one of the best groups for attracting beneficial insects, such as pollinators, and birds who enjoy the nutritious seeds. The most familiar member of this genus is the giant yellow scabious, *C. gigantea*, which flowers in midsummer, but to my mind it has rather coarse foliage and leaves a huge gap in the herbaceous border after flowering. More refined is this species with deeply divided, dark-green foliage and strong, branched stems with small, cream, scabious-like flowers that persist as seedheads into the winter months.

Height 2m.
Origin South-central Russia.
Growing conditions Well-drained soil; sun.
Hardiness rating RHS H7.
Season of interest Summer to winter.

colour on the dullest of days. A grove of Himalayan silver birch displays their gleaming white bark to perfection. Later, winter aconites and snowdrops carpet the ground. Quy Road, Lode, Cambridgeshire CB25 9EJ. Tel 01223 810080, nationaltrust.org.uk

Hollies are such versatile evergreen trees or shrubs and can be used as a specimen tree or topiarised into whatever shape takes your fancy. Female cultivars produce bright berries and many others have interesting foliage often variegated in creams, gold and silver. There are two **National Collections of *Ilex*** in the UK. One is in the private garden of Mr and Mrs Barnes near Newport in Pembrokeshire (open by request, call 01239 820688 for details), the other is at RHS Garden, Rosemoor, Great Torrington, Devon EX38 8PH. Tel 01805 624067, rhs.org.uk

Anglesey Abbey.

MARIANNE MAJERUS

READER EVENT
If you've enjoyed Marina's column over the past year, don't miss her talk on umbellifers at the *Gardens Illustrated* Festival. For more details see page 8, or go to **gardensfestival.com**

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Honeybees are vital for the healthy functioning of our gardens, fields and meadows – and with Eat Natural's Pollenation initiative, you can help ensure their future

Without honeybees, we'd live in a very different world. As well as producing vast amounts of delicious honey, the insects perform essential work in pollinating all sorts of plants. It's a subject that's close to the heart of those at Eat Natural: many of the ingredients found in their bars, from coconuts to cranberries, apricots to almonds, are reliant on pollinators such as honeybees.

That's why Eat Natural has launched Pollenation: a campaign designed to support the humble honeybee and promote the brilliant work they do. To start, they're searching for passionate, dedicated people to join a small army of beekeepers. The positions are open to anyone, whatever their background and experience, and those chosen will get all the help, support and equipment they'll need to get started – from protective clothing and tools to a state-of-the-art Eat Natural beehive, kitted out with hive-monitoring technology.
Eat Natural will even give you your bees!

At the heart of the initiative is the Eat Natural beehive, a groundbreaking piece of kit designed to create a buzz among a new wave of beekeepers. The hives are made from disused pallets from the Eat Natural Makery, and are designed and made in the UK by traditional woodworkers and metalworkers.

Get involved

If you'd like to apply to become a beekeeper, simply head to, **eatnatural.co.uk/pollenation**. You'll be asked to answer three simple questions, and explain why you think bees are so important and what would make you an ideal Eat Natural beekeeper.

Join Pollenation at eatnatural.co.uk/pollenation

Competition open to 18 years plus and resident in the UK. Closing date for entries is 22 December 2016. No purchase necessary. 25 prizes available. Must commit for a period of at least 2 years. Upload required. For full details, simply visit www.eatnatural.co.uk/pollenation

Pollenation
let's make honey

Eat Natural is keen to build close relationships with its beekeepers. So, for the lucky few selected, this is much more than a prize. Not only will you have the opportunity to share pictures and stories of your beekeeping experiences, but you'll help provide the key ingredient for a special fund-raising Eat Natural honey bar. And, most importantly, by providing data from your hives, you'll be aiding research into the honeybee and helping to ensure their future.

IN THE GARDEN

Jojo offers some tips for keeping your apple trees healthy, and plants up pots of a culinary rhizome to make lashings of a spicy, soft drink

WORDS **JOJO TULLOH** ILLUSTRATIONS **SARAH YOUNG**

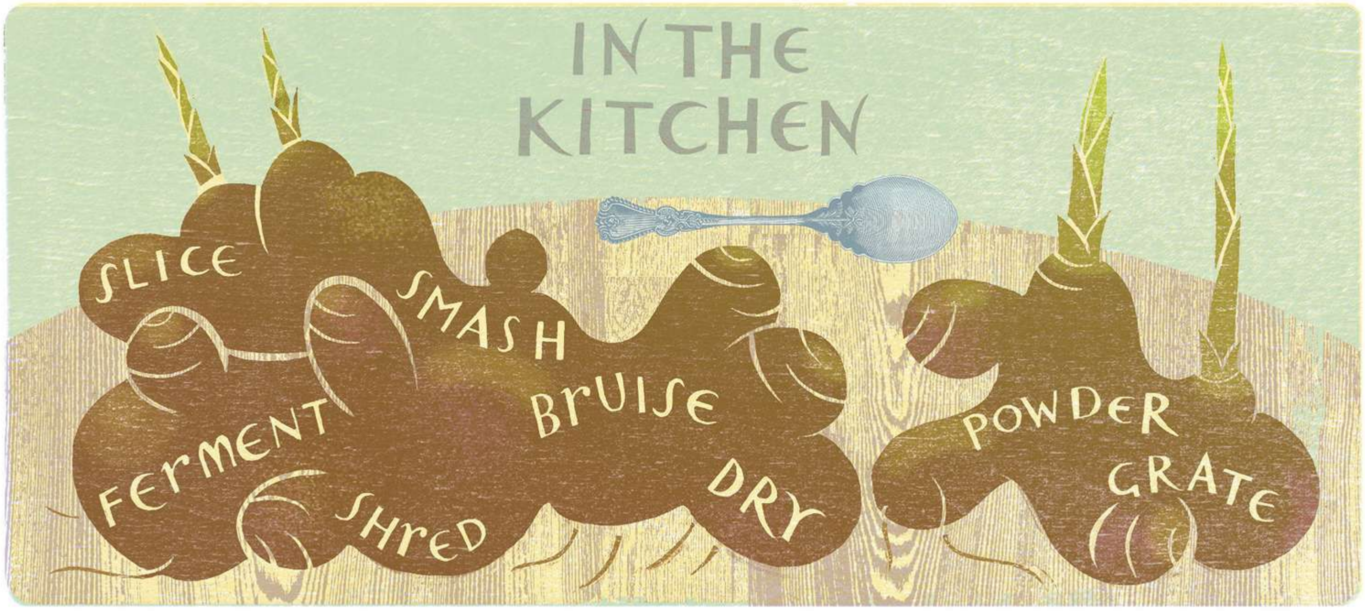
Most of us have a very clear image of the perfect apple tree; it has a smooth, straight trunk and evenly spreading branches laden with rosy fruit – and Adam and Eve cowering beneath. Achieving the ideal in reality is quite another thing. It's easy enough to plant an apple tree; far harder to keep one in good heart. Looking after an orchard requires that you check in every couple of weeks, even when everything seems fine, and take a hard look. It's easy to get distracted and only turn your attention to the tree when its leaves curl or the insects get the upper hand. December, when the growth of plants has slowed almost to a standstill, is the perfect time to learn a bit more about the conditions needed to keep trees healthy.

Weeds and briers should be scythed or sickled down across the year and grass kept short to deter pests and ensure the trees don't have to compete for nutrients. Docks and nettles should also be kept down by continual mowing, as these are alternative hosts for apple sawfly. Apple trees need feeding, they also need humus to hold the moisture in the soil and to encourage the many beneficial insects who help combat pests and disease. You can achieve this by collecting leaf mould or spent mushroom compost and spreading a rich layer around the base of the tree (manure is too rich in nitrogen and should be reserved for sickly trees that need a boost). The leaf mould attracts worms, which chew and spread the leaves, and best of all carnivorous ground beetles, which overwinter in the leaf litter as pupae and then hatch out in time to eat codling moth or apple sawfly larvae as they drop from the trees. Wrapping a sticky band around the trunk will catch climbing caterpillars later in the year. Pheromone traps hung in May, will also help with codling moths that burrow out from the centre of the apple, leaving an unsightly wormy mess. Make sure you pick up any affected fruit and tie a collar of corrugated cardboard around the tree; male codling moths can spin their cocoons in this and you can burn it. A friendlier insect is the common flower bug, for each one can eat thousands of red spider mites and greenfly. Look out for the eggs, which appear as smooth bulges on leaves, and be careful not to prune them away as you cut back any diseased or dead wood.

If you have low yields, with small, brightly coloured apples and leaves that start out pale green, then turn yellow and fall early, you are short of nitrogen, so feed with pelleted poultry manure. If your apples shed their leaves early, and show large brown splotching on the leaves, this is a sign of magnesium shortage, which can be cured by treating with Epsom salts dissolved in a water and poured around the tree. Leaves that are scorched brown at the edges are short of potassium, so spray the leaves with liquid seaweed. And if woolly aphids appear, try sowing buckwheat around the tree; its white flowers attract hoverflies whose larvae eat 800-900 aphids each. ▷

WHAT TO DO NOW

Short days and long, dark nights can be hard for those of us who like being outside. To counteract the gloom why not try and grow some stem ginger? The bushy, green-leaved plant looks good indoors and you'll gain a novel ingredient – fresh stem ginger. It's not hard to propagate, but try and find really fresh root ginger. Look for a smooth, pinkish buff skin and, if you are lucky, a little yellow triangular 'eye' will already have formed. Break the ginger into pieces and bury in potting compost with the tip of the ginger only just covered. Keep damp and covered with a plastic bag or clingfilm in a warm sunny spot, the green tips of the stems should start to push through in a few weeks. The stems will take several months to form, but the leaves can be used to flavour soups and noodle dishes. The plant will gradually bulk up and, in ideal conditions, will bloom at night, sporting orchid-like flowers.



A big piece of root ginger is one of the indispensable flavourings I need to round out the flavour of the fruits and vegetables I grow. Just like lemons, olive oil, butter, garlic and salt, it is something I try never to run out of. I use it sliced into coins and smashed to flavour dhal or peeled, grated and added to fried onion and garlic as a base for curries before adding spices. When grated, it can be pressed through a sieve to make ginger juice, which can be added to cocktails and fruit compotes or to marinade chunks of rhubarb before they go into a tart. For a home cold remedy, cut ginger into coins and smash, put in a cup and add a tablespoon of honey and the juice of half a fresh lemon and top up with boiling water. When you have grown your own stem ginger (see previous page), you can bruise it and add it to stocks and soups as you would lemon grass. The leaves can be used layered in a steamer with fish on top and in soups and curries too.

You may be forgiven for thinking that the culinary use of fresh root ginger (*Zingiber officinale*) is a relatively recent development in the UK, but its introduction dates back to Roman times. For the Romans, ginger was a highly prized import from the east, but it was used mainly medicinally. In India, where it has been used for around 5,000 years, it is still used in Ayurvedic medicine to combat stomach ailments and nausea. By the 15th century English cookery books were awash with ginger in both sweet and savoury recipes, but by the 18th century it was more likely to be found dried and used as a powdered spice in a pudding or a cake. Elizabeth David points out that an old English word for a ginger rhizome was a race, from which we get the word racy, as ginger was synonymous with everything hot and spicy.

Root ginger makes a good seasoning for a beef stir fry with seasonal greens. Take 450g of flank steak, sliced thinly across the grain, three tablespoons of soy sauce, one teaspoon of cornflour, a large thumb of ginger, peeled, sliced thinly and shredded, one medium onion, thinly sliced, around 150g of pak choy or hot mustard leaves, sesame oil and sugar to taste. Mix the soy sauce with the corn flour and a pinch of sugar, then add the beef and stir to coat. Heat two tablespoons of the oil in a wok, throw in the ginger and cook until crisp. Add the onion, cook until soft then add the meat and its liquid and stir until the meat is cooked, around five minutes. After three minutes add the leaves, stir until wilted, then add a teaspoon of sesame oil and a pinch of salt if needed. When the meat is cooked, serve immediately with rice. □

USEFUL COOKERY TIP

No.12 *Roasted vegetables*

For really sweet caramelised roasted vegetables, cook in a slow oven (150°C) so as not to toughen the skins and season with olive oil, salt and fresh sage.

RECIPES

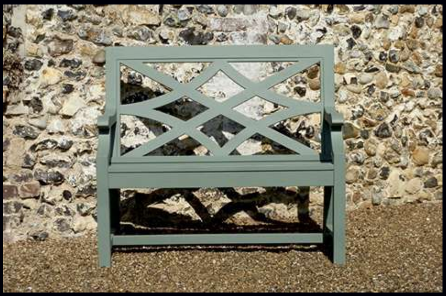
Ginger beer

1 large thumb fresh root ginger, 400g sugar, 250ml water, 2 lemons

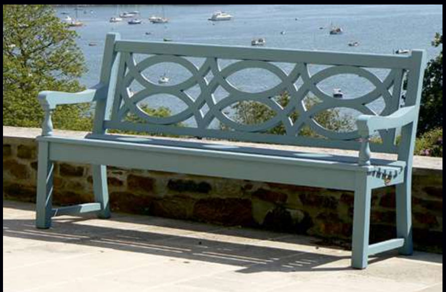
Fermentation is the way to create life even in the grip of winter's maw. In *Food in England*, the food historian Dorothy Hartley describes how as a child she loved to watch the ginger beer 'bee' (so called because it makes a faint humming sound) bubble up and down in a jar on the kitchen windowsill. In cold weather fermentation may take several days to a week to occur. Grate around 2tsp of the fresh root ginger into a bowl and mix with 2tsp of the sugar and all of the water. Stir well and pour into a large preserving or jam jar. Cover the top of the jar with cheesecloth or kitchen roll and secure with an elastic band, but don't seal the jar. Once the surface looks gassy and bubbly, bring 2 litres of water to the boil and add the rest (2tbsp) of the freshly grated ginger and the rest of the sugar. Stir until the sugar has dissolved and then allow to cool. When the sugar water has cooled, strain into another bowl and add the juice of 2 lemons (sieved) and the mixture from the ginger beer 'bee' jar (sieved). Reserve a tablespoon of 'bee' mixture for the next batch if you wish to make more. Place the bottles in a warm place for a couple of days and then in the fridge. Keep checking to make sure not too much gas is collecting in the bottles and let a little out. Use plastic bottles as these will swell and won't shatter if the gas builds up too much. The ginger beer will be ready in about a week but check after four days.

Andrew Crace

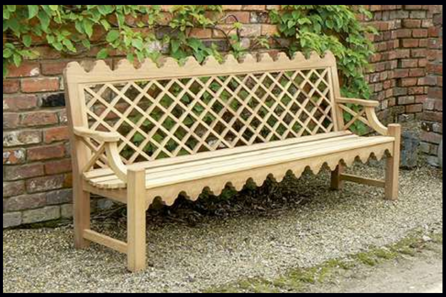
English Garden Furniture



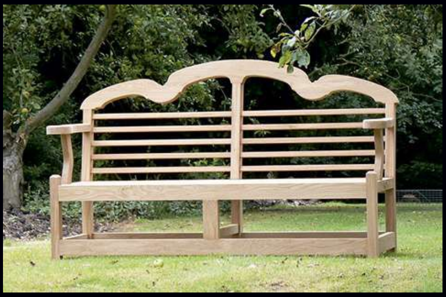
Charles Over 2 Seater painted Smoke Green



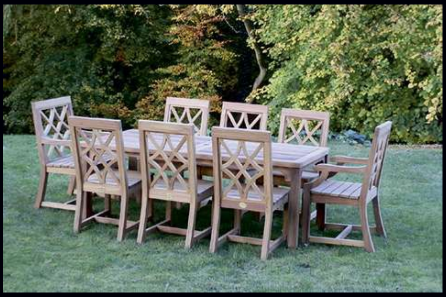
Hatfield 3 Seater painted Cobalt Blue



Indian Lattice 4 Seater



Sissinghurst Sun Seat



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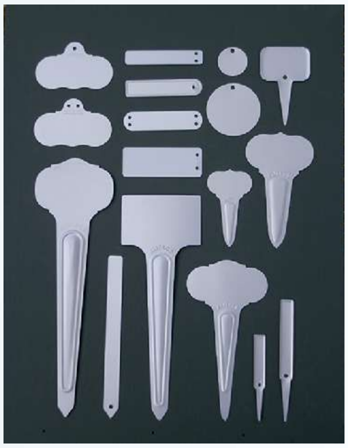

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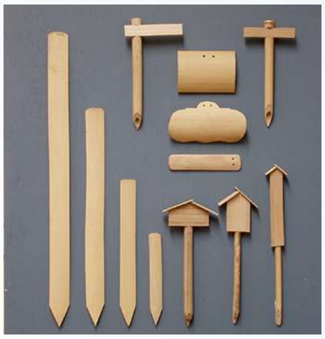

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plantsman's garden

A late blooming

Adrian Bloom's garden, Foggy Bottom in Norfolk, has been 50 years in the making. An expertly planted garden, designed to provide year-long interest, it is especially beautiful in winter when its architectural qualities come to the fore

WORDS MATTHEW BIGGS PHOTOGRAPHY RICHARD BLOOM

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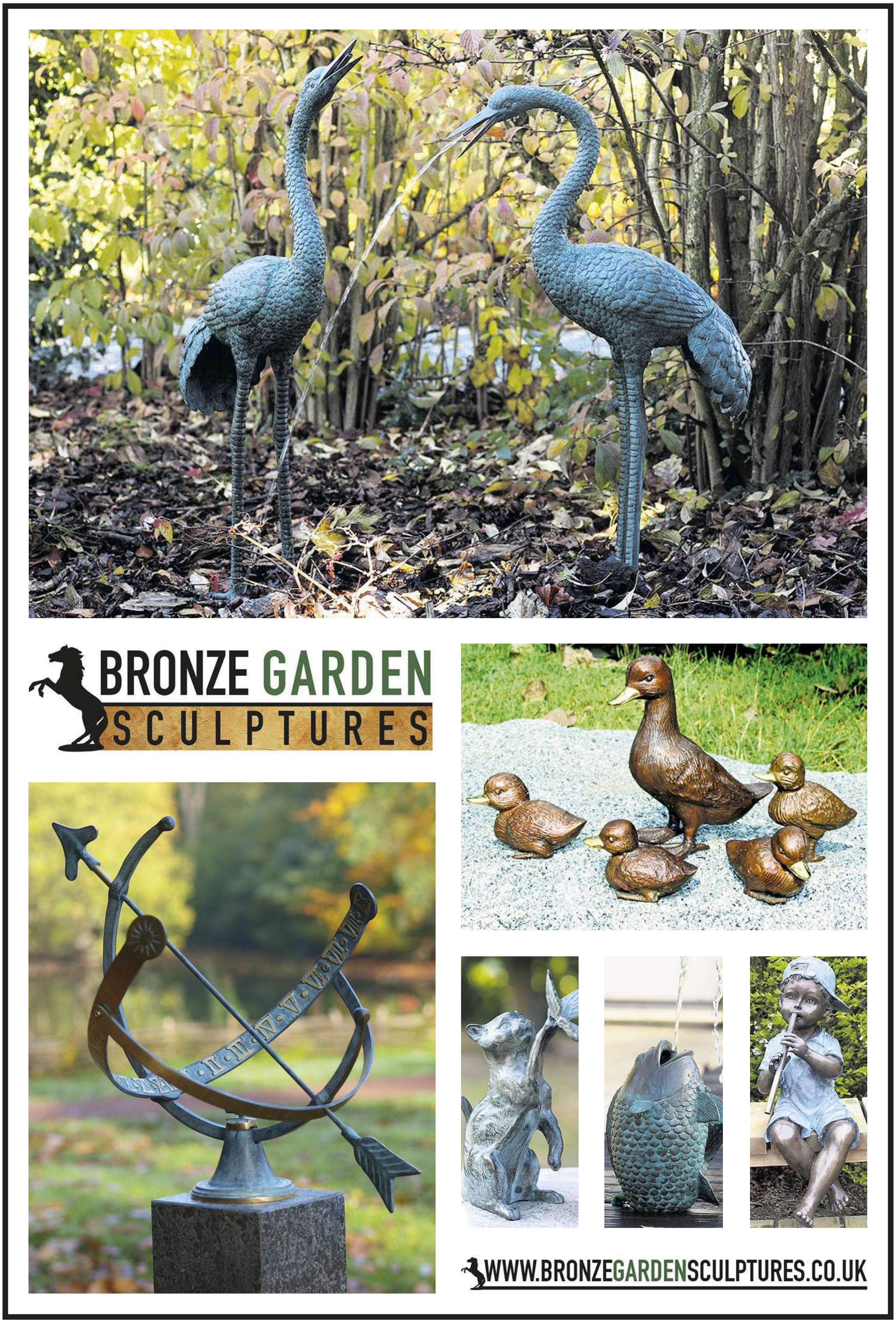
GARDENS
ILLUSTRATED

Michael Wachter

Born in Germany, Michael has also spent time gardening in Japan and is now furthering his international outlook on horticulture as a gardener at Great Dixter in East Sussex

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Earliest gardening memory As a five-year-old trying to increase the biodiversity of our lawn by blowing dandelions into the area. My father thought I was crazy as I explained that there was colour missing.
First plant love *Artemisia vulgaris* – as I grew up near the Alps in Germany, where we would put artemisia in our shoes to keep feet fresh and energetic while climbing up and down the mountains. Also it makes a great tea and herb; a real giving plant.
Who has inspired your career the most? Nature has always been my biggest inspiration. Great plant combinations, colour schemes, the right density and spacing – it's all there. Yet mastering the ability to imitate nature is one of the most challenging things you can do.
Horticultural heroes All the people I work with each day. I believe that everybody has something interesting I can learn from. Keeping that open mind makes daily gardening exciting and rich.
Favourite landscape and garden Tashiro's Forest [issue 233, page 72] in Hokkaido, Japan, is my favourite landscape at the moment. It is managed in such a delicate, nearly invisible, way that the essence and spirit of the place are preserved yet still highlighted.
Three worthwhile tips In Japan, my old head gardener, Midori Shintani taught me to develop the ability to be patient (*nintai*), to focus (*shūchū*) and to observe (*kansatsu*).
Favourite planting style Wild, energetic, full of contrasts, naturalistic.
Least favourite plant group I try giving everything a chance since I learned at Great Dixter that often the unexpected choice can be the most exciting. Of course, failing is a vital part of learning and perfecting an idea. I think as long as you take notes and learn and improve, even ugly plant combinations are nothing bad.
Biggest challenge facing gardeners Not being afraid of making changes. It is easy to maintain a garden but hard to develop it.
What heartens you about our attitudes to horticulture today? I think Dan Pearson's garden for Chatsworth House at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2015 pushed more people to appreciate and accept meadows and the naturalistic look. He encouraged them to try creating wild areas for themselves. With a loss of 95 per cent of this habitat throughout Europe, we need more species-rich grassland.
michaelwachter90@web.de



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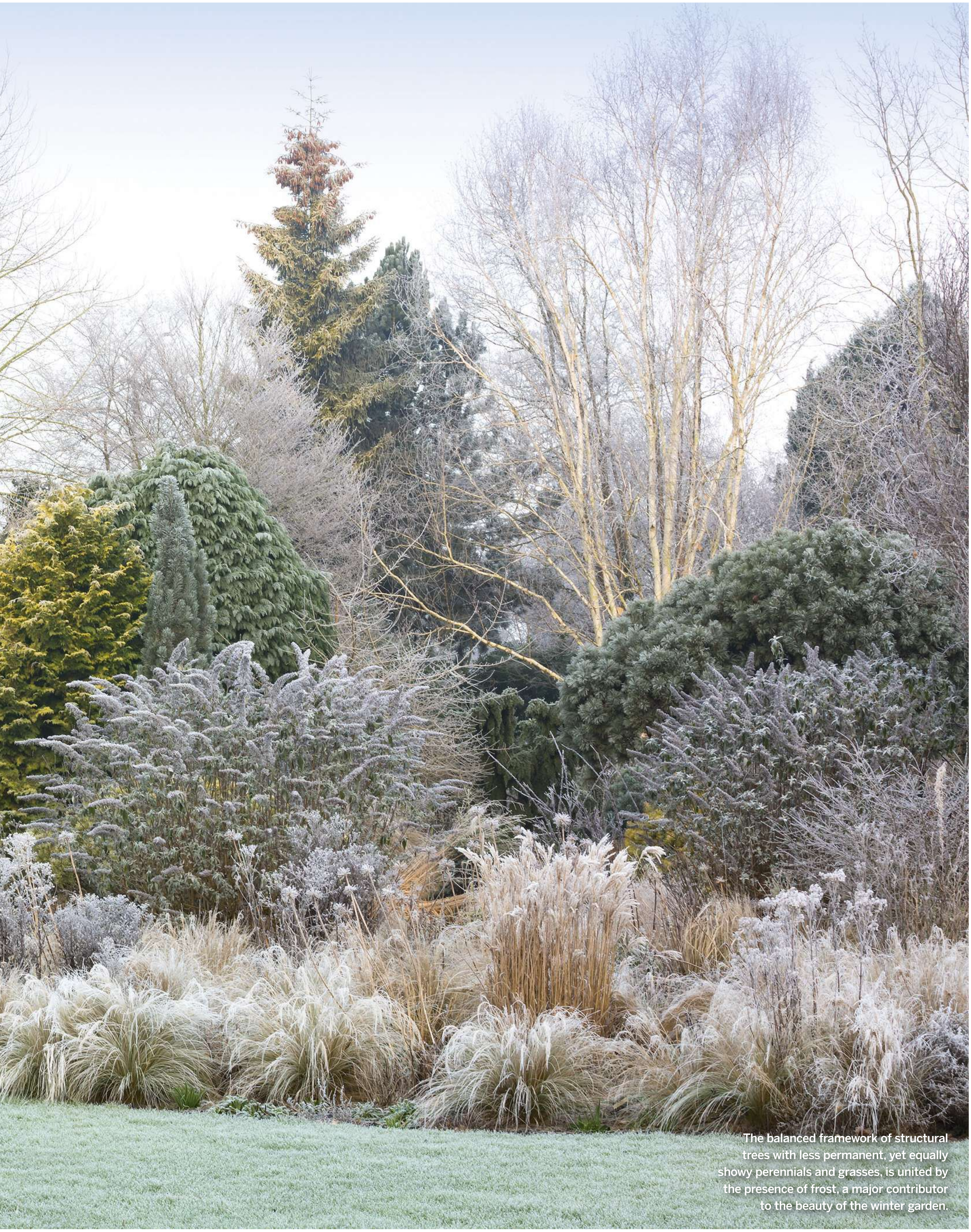
A late blooming

Adrian Bloom's garden, Foggy Bottom in Norfolk, has been 50 years in the making. An expertly planted garden, designed to provide year-long interest, it is especially beautiful in winter when its architectural qualities come to the fore

WORDS MATTHEW BIGGS PHOTOGRAPHS RICHARD BLOOM

In brief

Name Foggy Bottom.
What A year-round garden, with an extensive range of interesting plants.
Where Bressingham, Norfolk.
Size Six acres.
Soil Variable, shallow alluvial soil over sand to heavy loam.
Climate Hot dry summers, winter damp and frost.
Hardiness rating USDA 8.



The balanced framework of structural trees with less permanent, yet equally showy perennials and grasses, is united by the presence of frost, a major contributor to the beauty of the winter garden.

Broad pathways create a wintery vista towards the house. There is a dramatic transformation as the winter sun gradually dissipates the frost and the vibrant colours come alive.

Fifty years ago this year, Adrian Bloom began creating the garden Foggy Bottom from meadowland, with the focus on planting for year-round interest. In the early days, the large, irregular island beds, between meandering turf paths, were planted with conifers and heathers, a plant association popularised by Adrian. These have evolved to the mixed borders of today, which are continually being replanted, as ageing trees are removed. Rivers of low-growing plants, such as silvery leaved *Brunnera macrophylla* 'Jack Frost' and *Imperata cylindrica* 'Rubra', punctuate the borders, creating enticing vistas to the plantings beyond, while the clear stems of trees reveal the under-appreciated bark of plants such as *Pinus sylvestris* and create space for under-planting. I talk to Adrian about his glorious, peaceful garden where attention to detail and plantsmanship reign supreme.

What or who inspired you to garden?

I suppose it is a combination of nature and nurture. My father Alan and grandfather Charles were passionate about plants and I was always surrounded by them. Initially, I didn't want to come into the business at all. At 18, I went to America for two years and did various jobs but decided that horticulture was worth trying after all. When something is in your blood, you can run, but you can't hide; it catches you in the end.

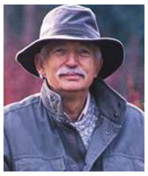
Were there any particular gardens that influenced Foggy Bottom?

I remember a garden called Foxhollow in Windlesham, Surrey, owned by John F Letts and his wife. They were focussed more on heathers than conifers, but their plantings revealed the potential of both. The garden was quite atmospheric and relatively small, but it made a huge impression on me.

Which would you say is your favourite plant or plant group for the winter garden?

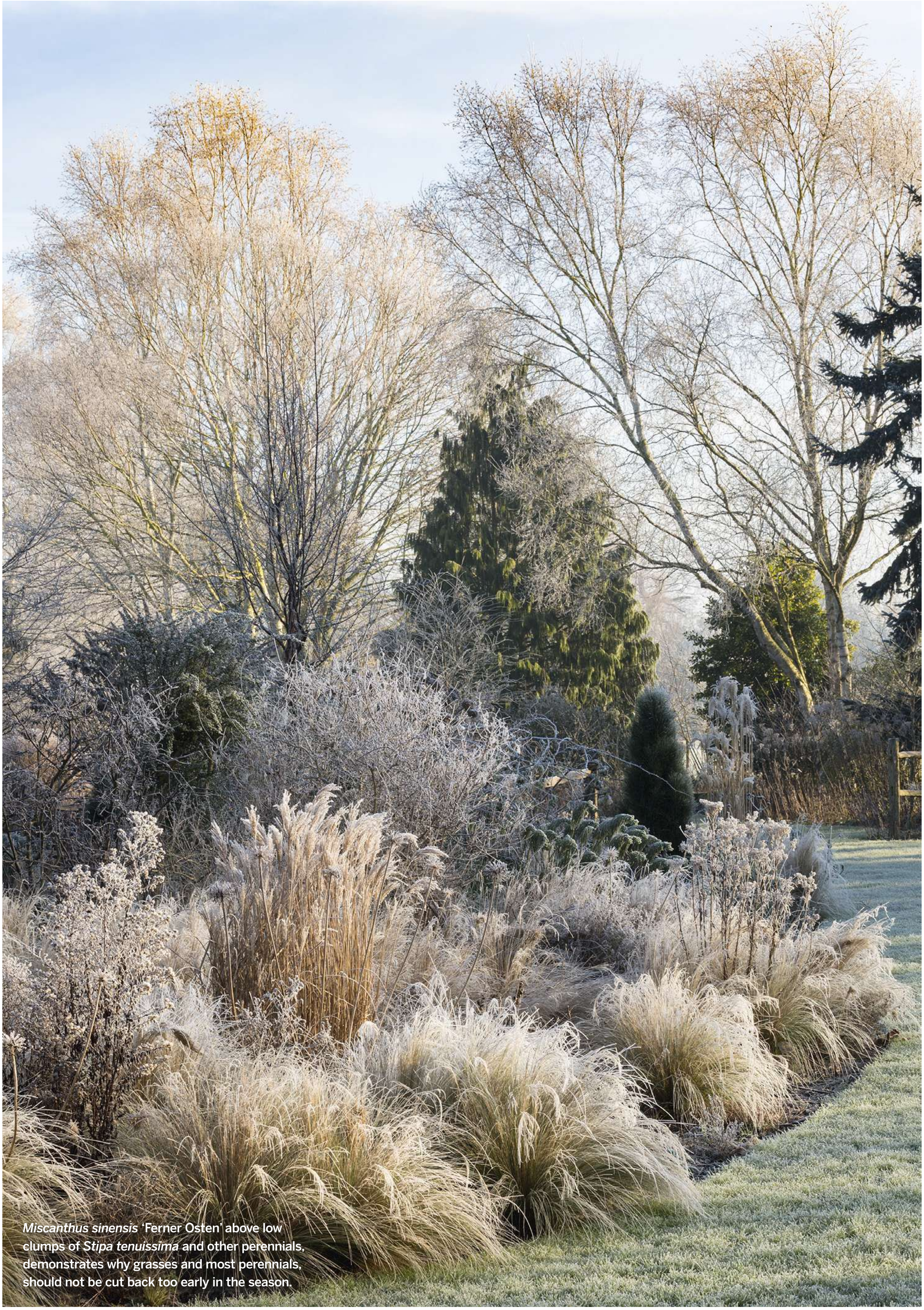
It would have to be the coloured stemmed dogwoods – whether planting one or several hundred, they are reliable and always create an impact and there is autumn colour from

To continue turn to page 42 ▷

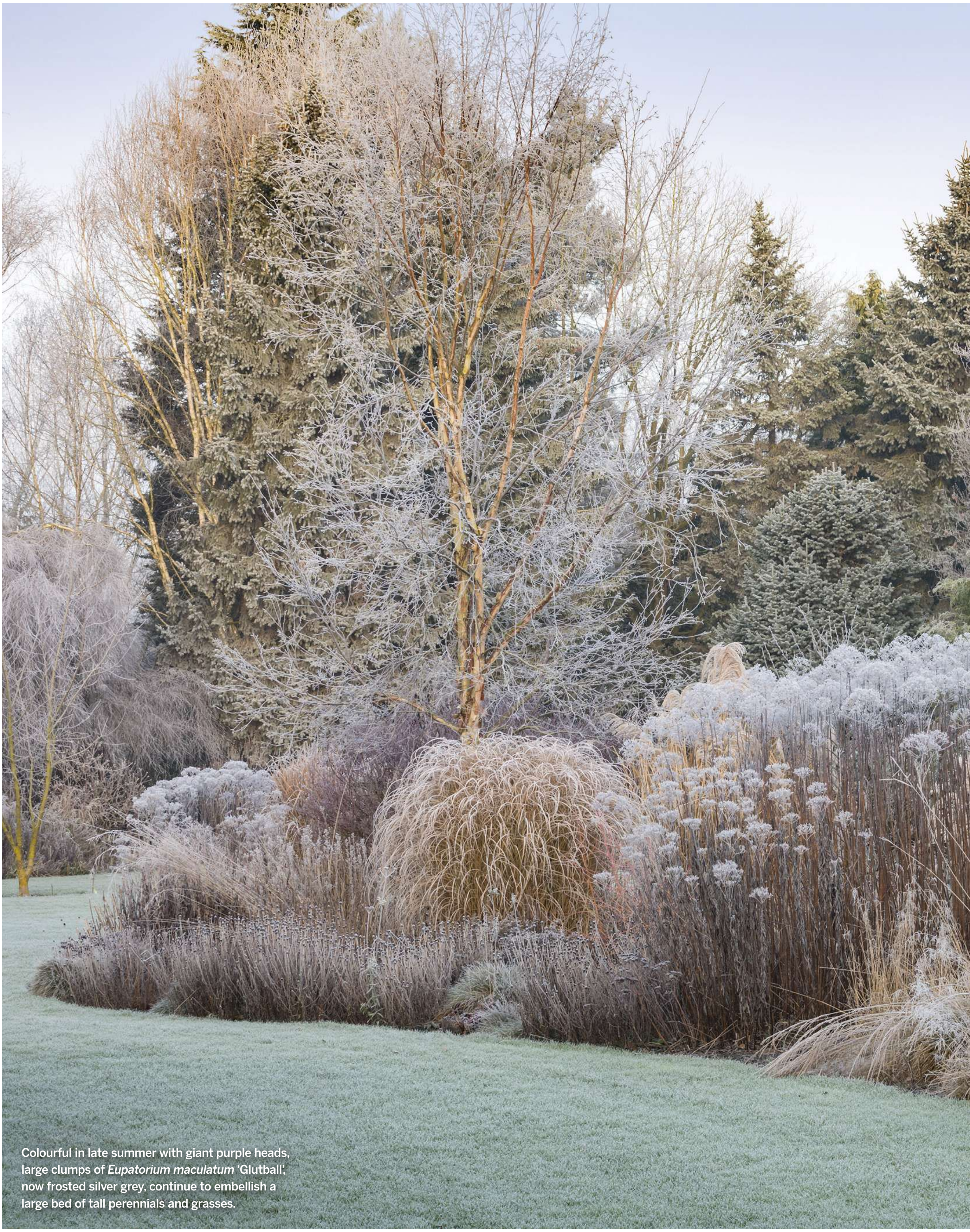


The Bloom dynasty

Adrian Bloom (left) is just one in a long line of innovative nurserymen. His grandfather, Charles, ran a small market garden in Cambridgeshire and in the 1920s he helped his son Alan to set up a wholesale perennial nursery nearby. In 1946 Alan bought Bressingham Hall in Norfolk, moving his ever-expanding nursery, to its grounds and creating the renowned Dell Garden. During his lifetime, Alan introduced several famous cultivars at Bressingham, including *Crocosmia* 'Lucifer'. in 1966. Adrian joined the business in 1962, and is still involved, although today it's his eldest son Jason who manages the nursery. The 17-acre Bressingham site is made up of six distinct areas, including the Dell Garden (curated since Alan's death by his son-in-law Jaime Blake), Foggy Bottom and a new Winter Garden. Adrian's middle son Matt is involved on new projects in the gardens, while his youngest son Richard is a well-known photographer, who shot the atmospheric images seen on these pages.



Miscanthus sinensis 'Ferner Osten' above low clumps of *Stipa tenuissima* and other perennials, demonstrates why grasses and most perennials, should not be cut back too early in the season.



Colourful in late summer with giant purple heads, large clumps of *Eupatorium maculatum* 'Glutball', now frosted silver grey, continue to embellish a large bed of tall perennials and grasses.

"Plants tend to surprise. Some are familiar; others you learn to appreciate, so be open to their contributions and value their virtues"

Early morning sun spreads light across the pond at Foggy Bottom, highlighting the winter silhouettes of trees, among them the swamp cypress, *Taxodium distichum*, on the island.

> *"In winter there is less to do in the garden, so there is time to enjoy the plants and appreciate the impact of low, winter light"*

▷ foliage, too. *Cornus sanguinea* 'Midwinter Fire' or 'Winter Beauty' under-planted with *Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Nigrescens' and the vigorous snowdrop *Galanthus* 'S Arnott', makes an attractive combination. I've used this with single plants of each, in a container, so there's no excuse for neglecting winter interest, even in a courtyard garden.

What was the biggest challenge you faced when creating the garden?

We suffered several setbacks because of the location, one winter the garden flooded and the only way we could get around was by canoe. We lost plants because of the high water table in parts of the garden and late frosts have caused endless problems.

How has the garden developed?

It has gradually evolved, reflecting our ideas and styles during each era. It was originally used for trialling plants from around the world, such as junipers from the USA, then conifers and heathers in island beds. We knew that as the conifers and heathers grew, the garden would have to change with it, so other plants were incorporated over time. We now pay homage to our heritage in an eclectic mix of woody plants, herbaceous and grasses. Evergreen conifers, blended with deciduous trees still remain the backbone, though heathers play a lesser role.

Tell us about the winter features?

I am a big fan of conifers that change colour in winter, such as *Pinus mugo* 'Carsten's Wintergold' and *P. mugo* 'Ophir', which become bright-gold in winter, but my favourite is the deep, glowing gold of *Pinus contorta* 'Chief Joseph'. There are perennials and grasses that highlight other plants, but in recent years I have added many trees with attractive bark. Few are more striking than *Acer griseum*, the paperbark maple, but we have several selections of silver birch, including *Betula* 'Mount Apoi', which is little known but ideal for the smaller garden. Some of the snakebark maples are also amazing, such as *Acer* x *conspicuum* 'Phoenix' and 'Silver Vein'. There is colour and interest from ground level, right up to the top of the trees.

What are the key things you have learned during the creation of Foggy Bottom?

Plants tend to surprise. Some are familiar; others you learn to appreciate, so be open to their contributions and value their virtues. In winter there is less to do in the garden, so there is time to enjoy the plants and appreciate the impact of low, winter light. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

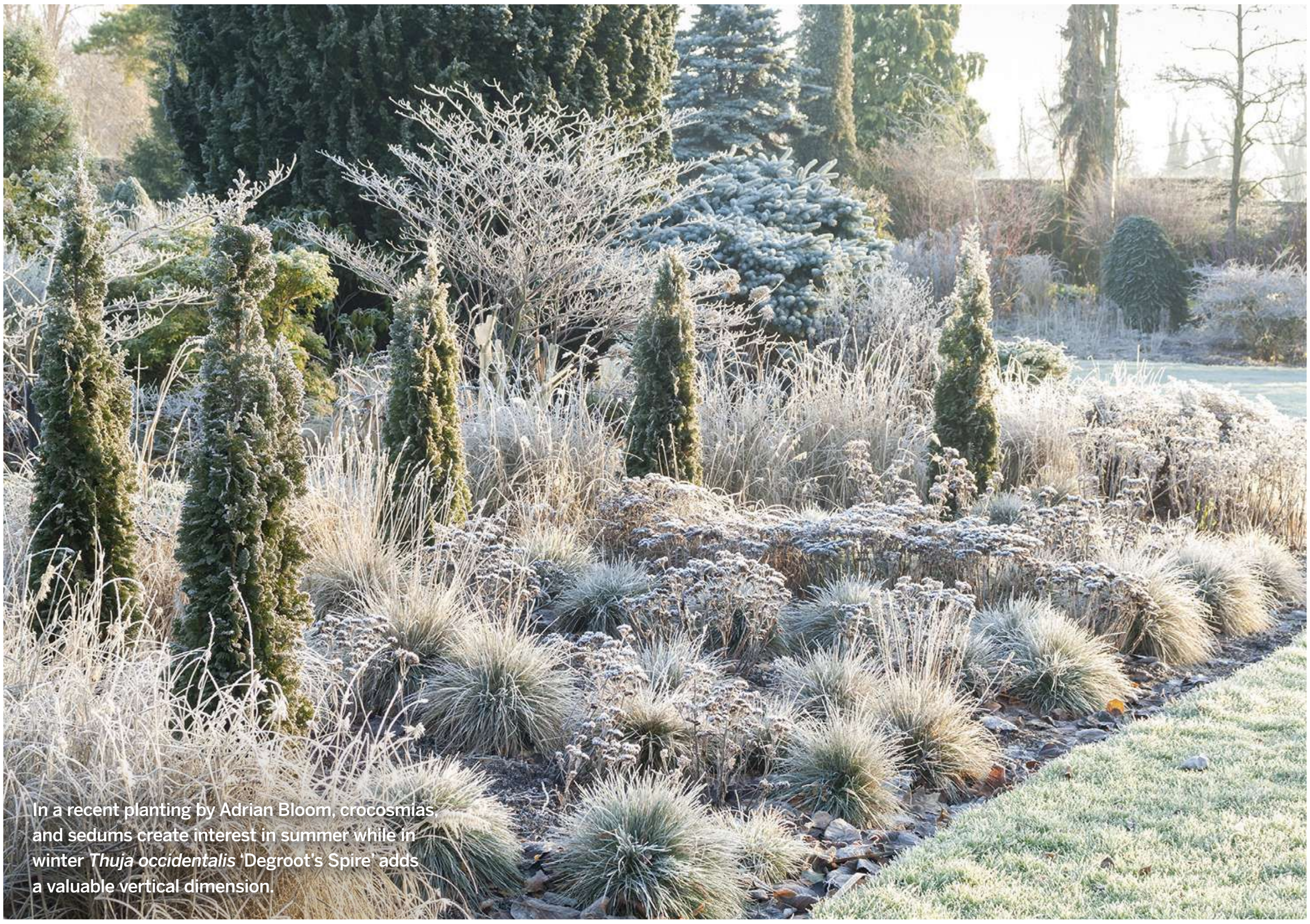
Address Bressingham Gardens, Low Road, Diss, Norfolk IP22 2AB.

Tel 01379 688282.

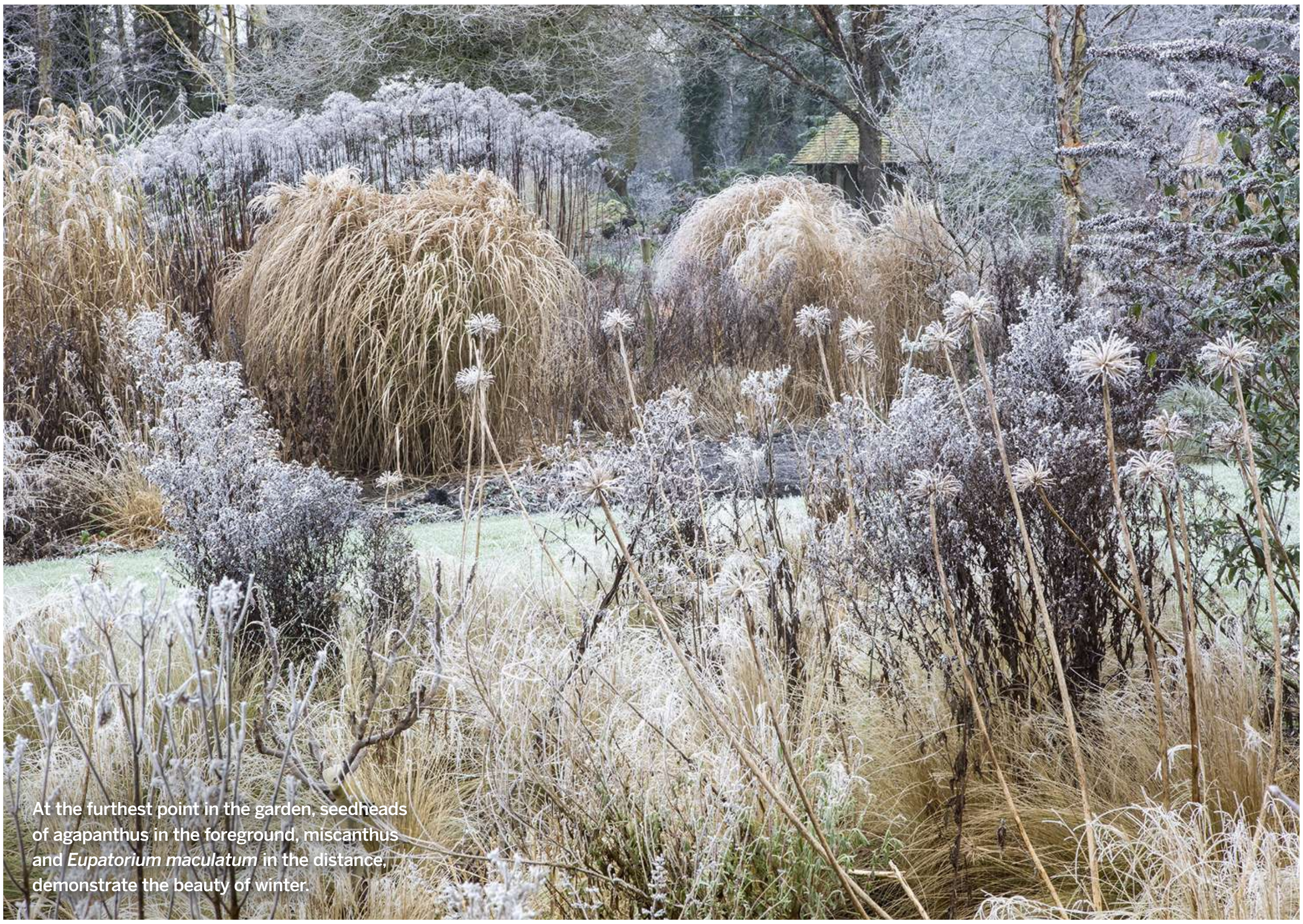
Website thebressinghamgardens.com

Open Foggy Bottom and the Winter Garden are open from mid February to end of March 2017. See website for full details.

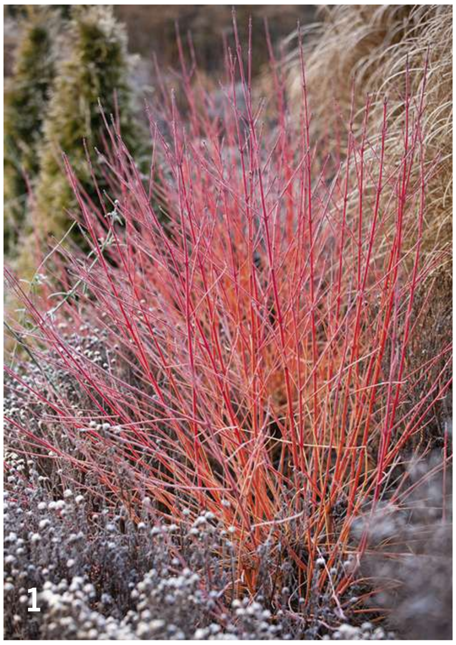
Turn over for Adrian's favourite winter plants ▷



In a recent planting by Adrian Bloom, crocosmias and sedums create interest in summer while in winter *Thuja occidentalis* 'Degroot's Spire' adds a valuable vertical dimension.



At the furthest point in the garden, seedheads of agapanthus in the foreground, miscanthus and *Eupatorium maculatum* in the distance, demonstrate the beauty of winter.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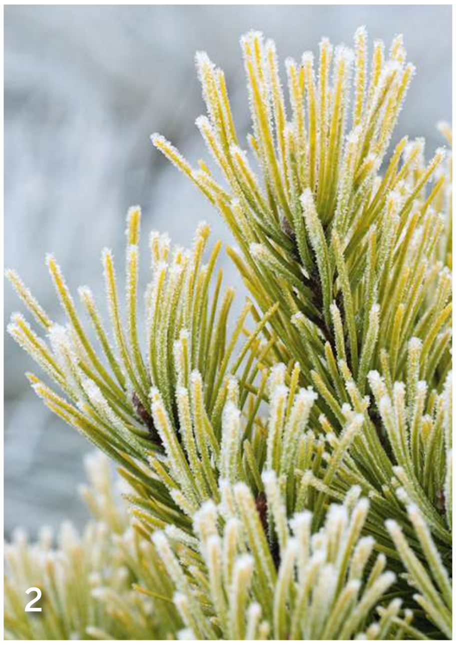
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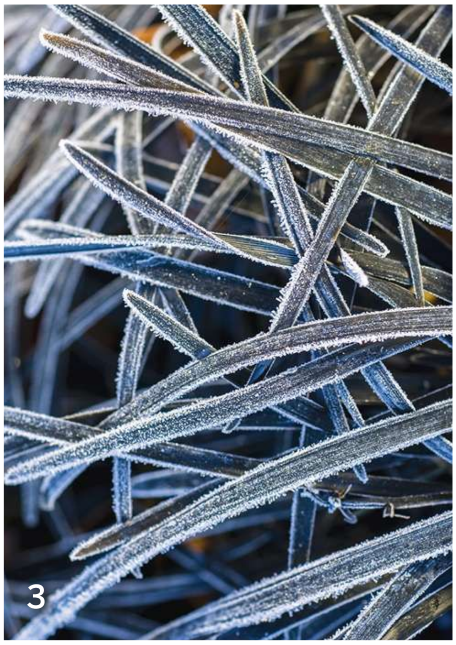
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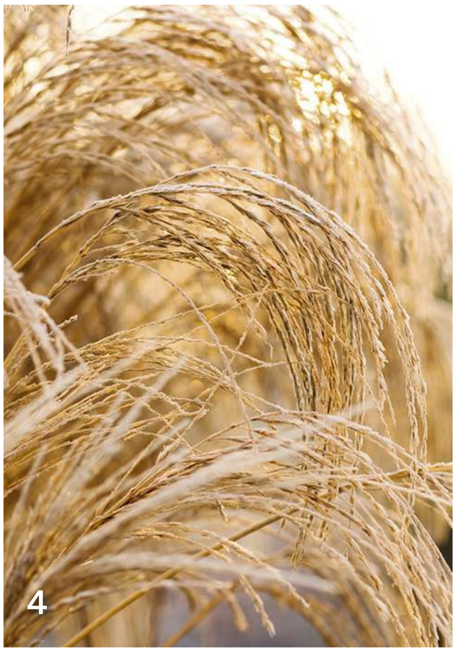
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Nine favourite winter plants

1 *Cornus sanguinea* 'Midwinter Fire' Most striking in an open position, the colder the weather the more intense the colour.

2 *Pinus mugo* 'Carsten' Mountain pine with deep golden needles.

3 *Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Nigrescens' When frosted, the leaves appear almost variegated.

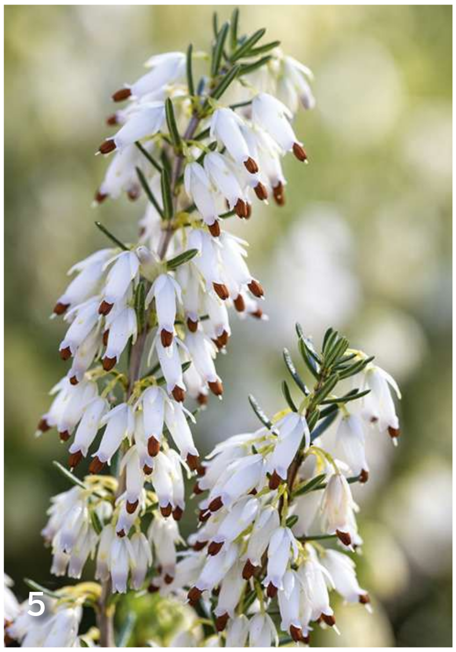
4 *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Flamingo' The weight of frost and moisture enhance the beauty of its pendulous inflorescences.

5 *Erica carnea* f. *alba* 'Springwood White' Close scrutiny of the lightly fragrant flowers reveals their charm. Much appreciated by bees.

6 *Microbiota decussata* This low-growing conifer turns deep bronze in winter, creating a lovely contrast with *Acorus gramineus* 'Ogon'.

7 *Betula* 'Mount Apoi' Striking when combined with colourful *Erica carnea* 'Myretoun Ruby'.

8 *Hamamelis* x *intermedia* 'Pallida' One of the most popular witch hazels; fragrant in flower.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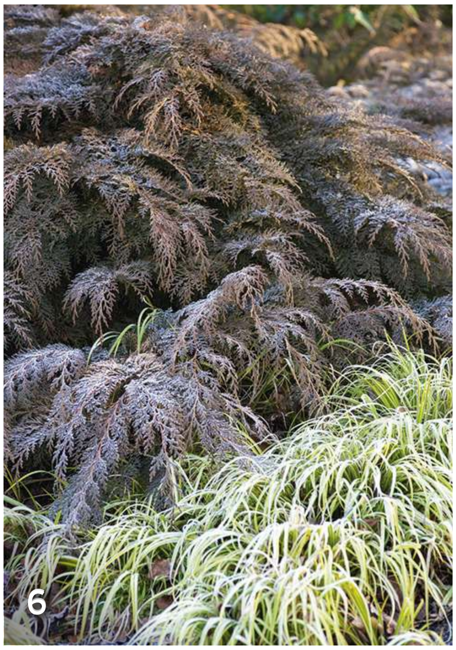
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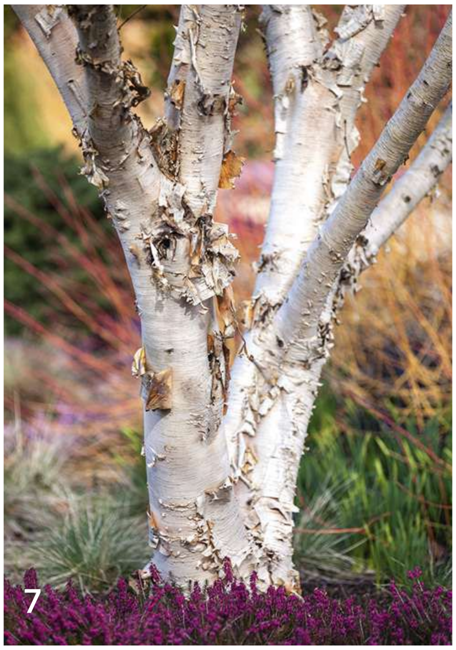
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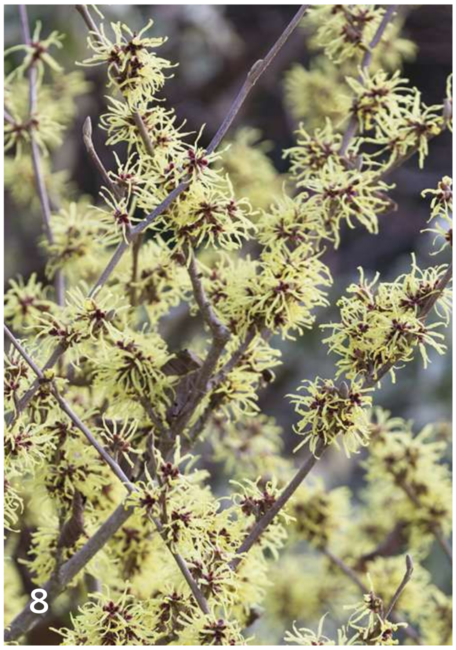
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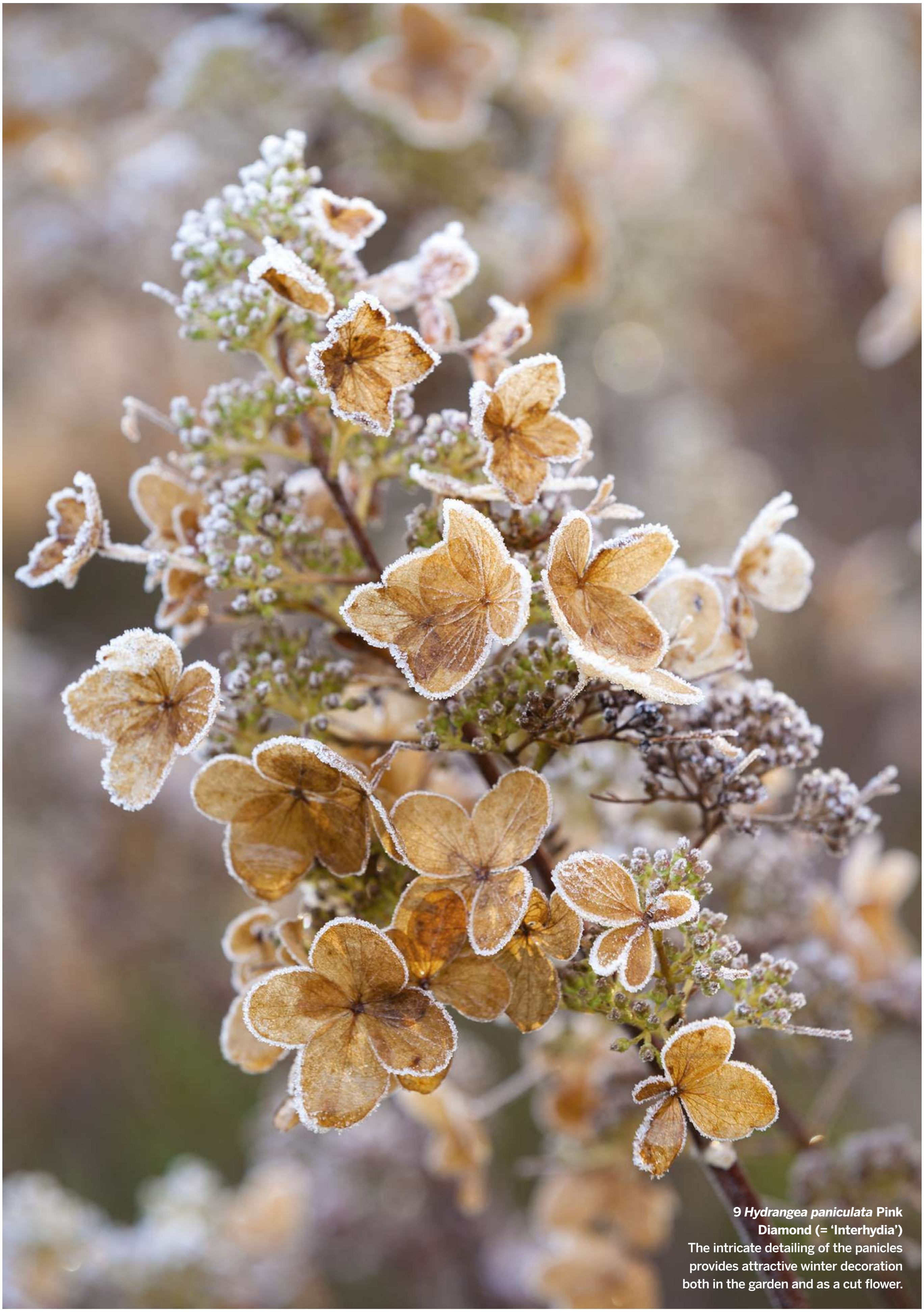
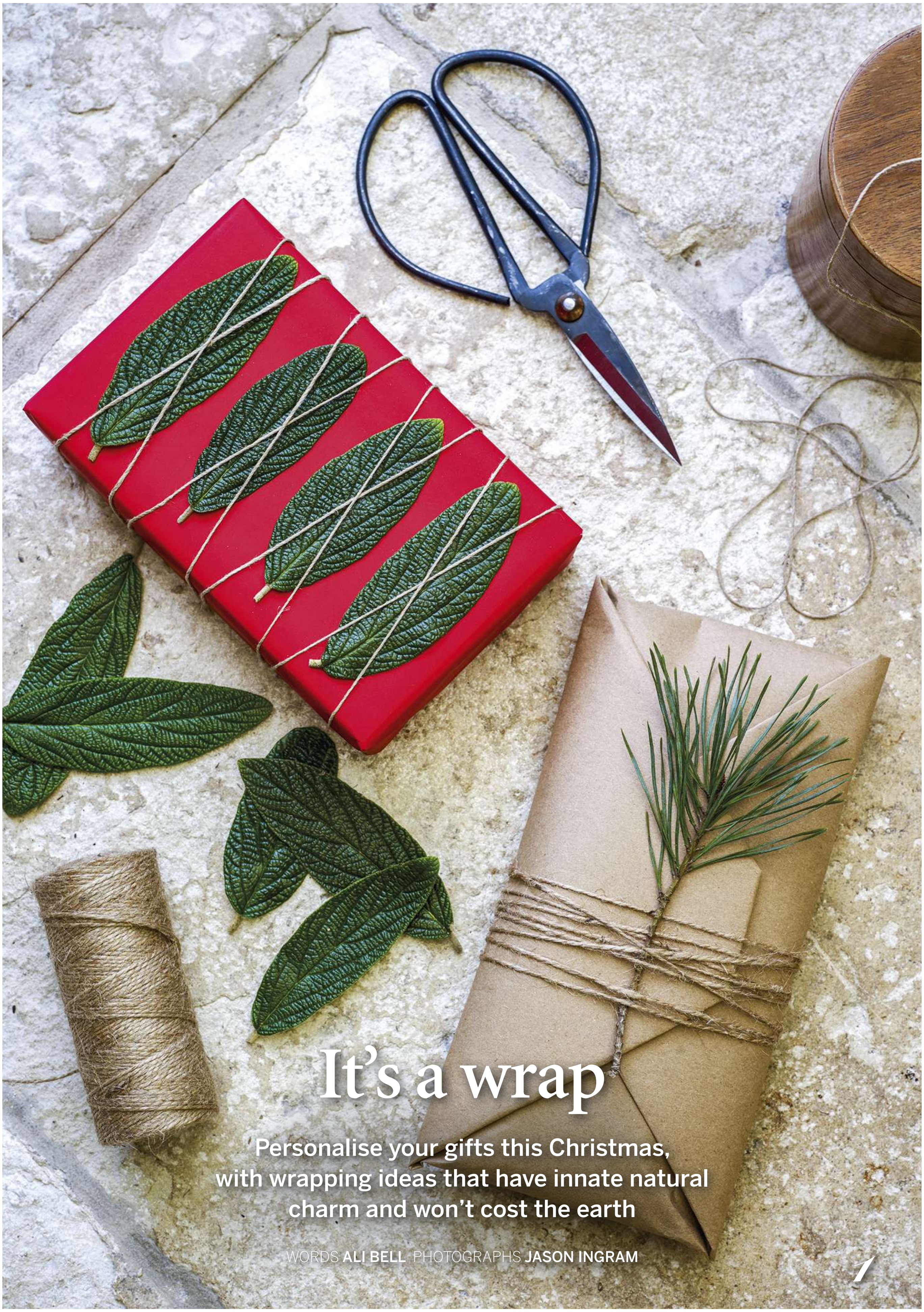


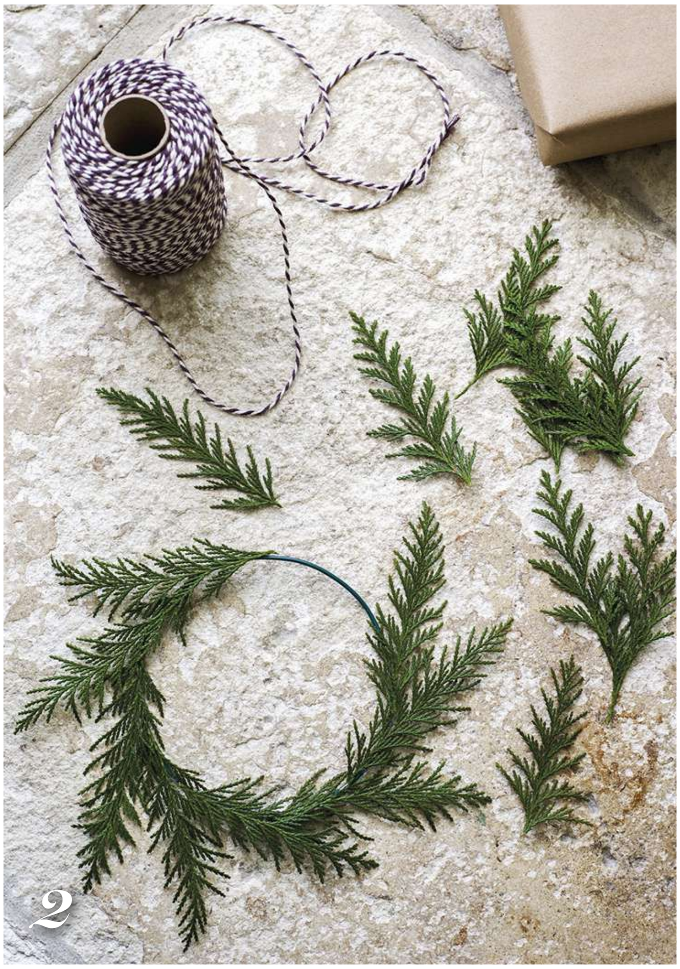
9 *Hydrangea paniculata* Pink Diamond (= 'Interhydia')
The intricate detailing of the panicles provides attractive winter decoration both in the garden and as a cut flower.

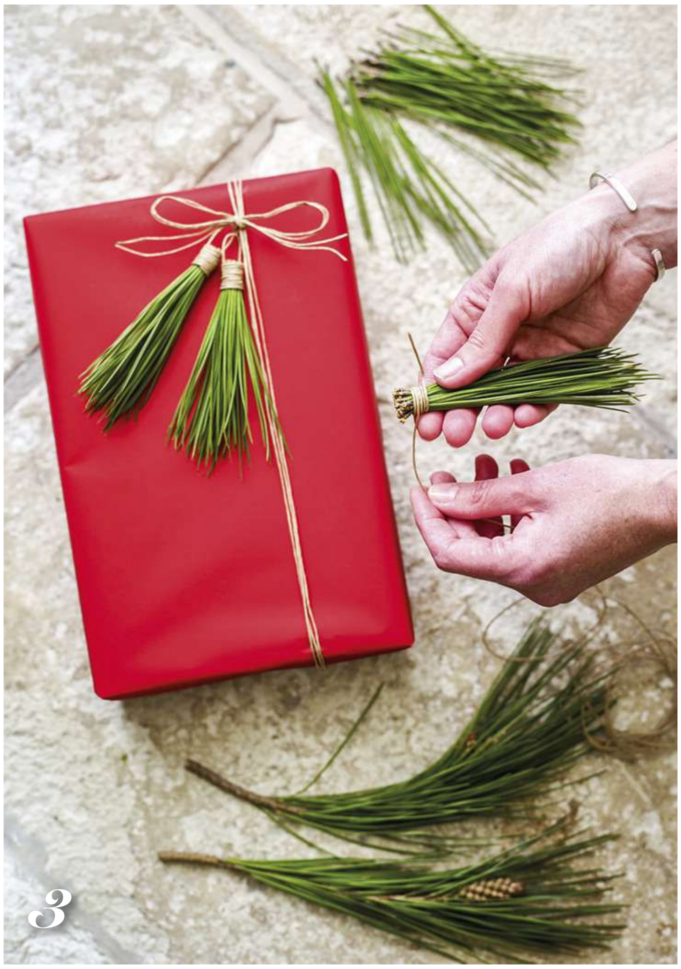


It’s a wrap

Personalise your gifts this Christmas, with wrapping ideas that have innate natural charm and won’t cost the earth

WORDS **ALI BELL** PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM**





Festive foliage

1 Bound foliage

After wrapping your present in brown or red kraft paper, use a natural jute cord to bind evergreen foliage in place in an attractive way. Use textured leaves, such as *Viburnum rhytidophyllum*, or classic and tactile Christmas evergreens, such as *Pinus sylvestris*.

2 Thuja wreath

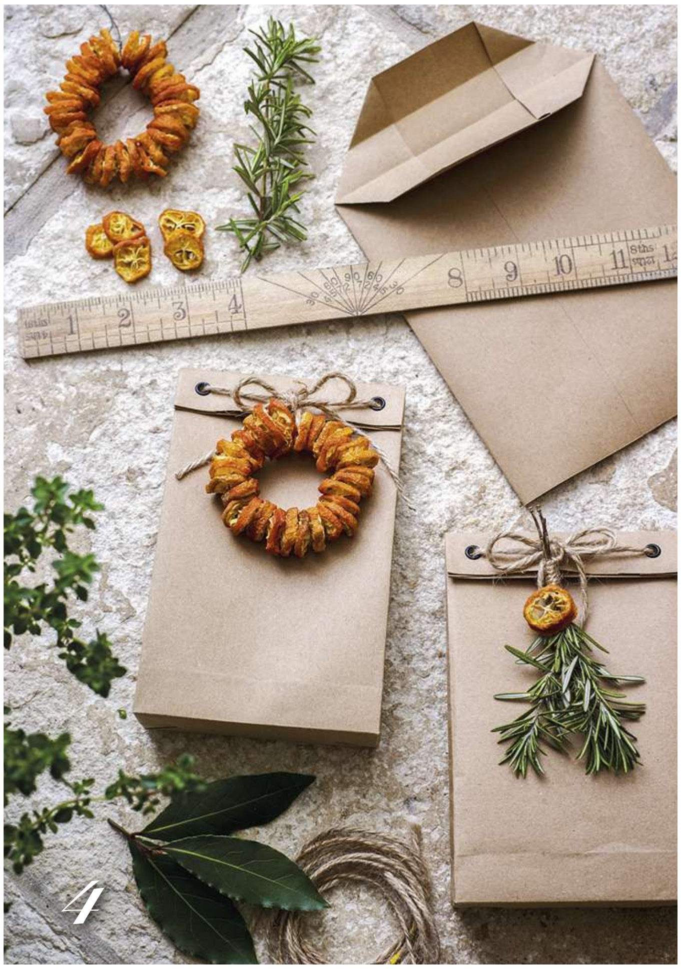
Make a circle from covered florists wire. Using a glue gun attach ten pieces of *Thuja plicata*, with each piece overlapping, until all the wire is covered. Loop baker's twine around opposite sides of the wreath and tie securely at the base of the package. Repeat, looping the twine at the top and bottom and again secure in place.

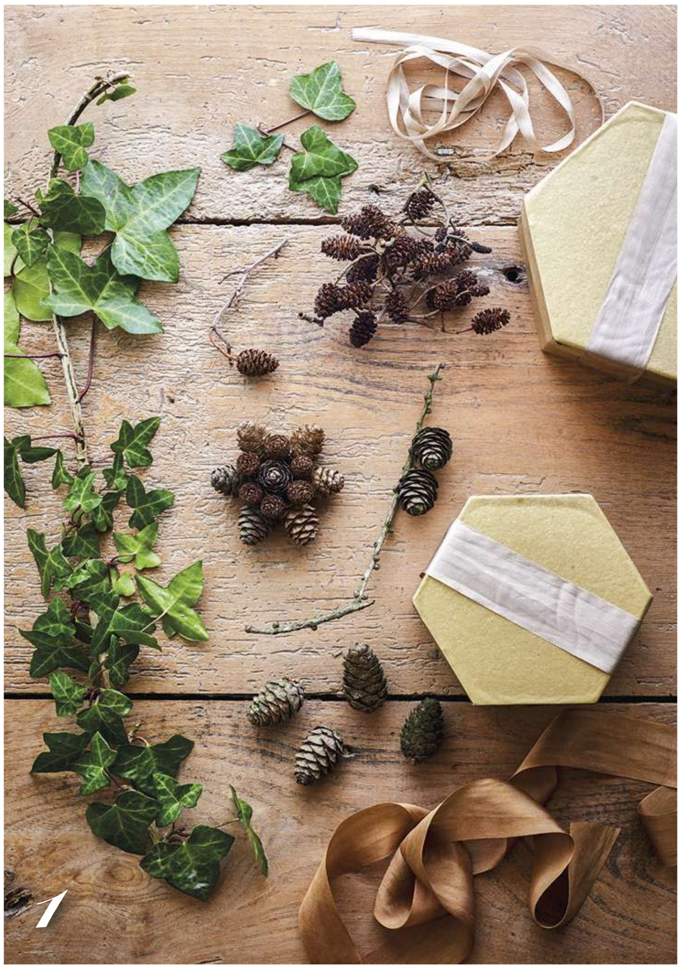
3 Pine needle tassels

Select a few tips of *Pinus pinea*, which have long, elegant needles, and strip into two equal-sized bundles. Secure with a band, then bind with natural coloured bindwire, creating a hanging hook. Tie to your gift using more bindwire, making a bow for decoration.

4 Scented herb bags

Make folded brown bags out of kraft paper. Add your gift and fold over the top, punching in eyelets with a punch plier. Tie jute bows through the holes and decorate with dried kumquat wreaths or herb posies of thyme, rosemary and bay.

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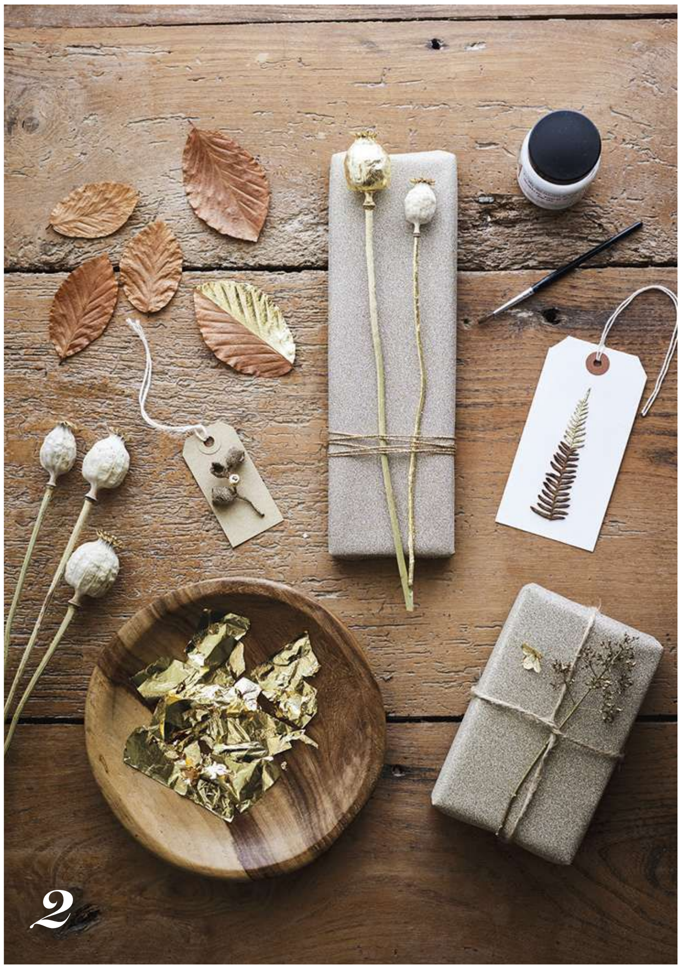
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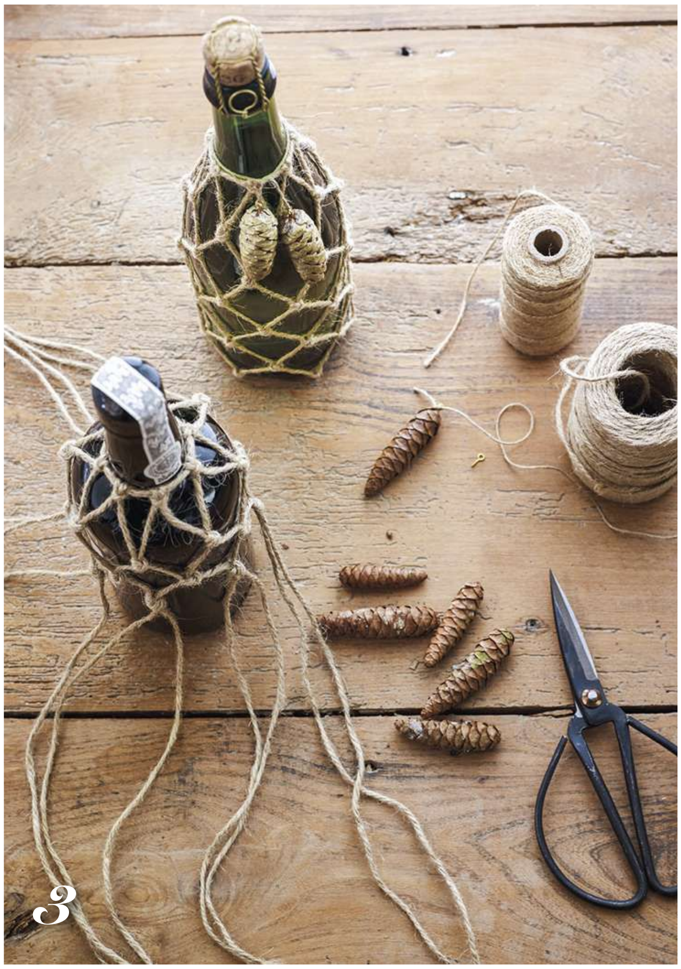
Glittering prizes

1 Glittery pine cone flowers
Spray a gift box gold and wrap with silk ribbon. Glue six *Larix decidua* cones in a star shape and fix one more in the centre. Add six *Alder* cones into the gaps created. Spray sparingly with gold glitter. Attach to the ribbon, along with pressed *Hedera helix* leaves.

2 Gold leaves
Guild sections of leaves or other plant material, using imitation gold leaf. First apply acrylic gold size to the leaf, let it dry for 15 minutes, then add the gold leaf using a dry brush or tweezers.

3 Macramé bottle with gold pine cone tassel
Cut seven lengths of jute twice the height of your bottle, fold in half and attach to a smaller length that will tie to the neck of your bottle. Space evenly to give seven paired strands and knot the strands together making diamond shapes and tie off ends. Attach gold-sprayed *Picea abies* cones to the jute using brass eye screws.

4 Sprayed gold foliage
Soak *Pteridium aquilinum* leaves in a solution of one part glycerin to two parts water for two to six days. This preserves the leaf and adds flexibility and strength, so it can be sprayed gold and attached to a gift. Similarly preserved *Acer palmatum* leaves can be added to kraft paper to make a dramatic patterned wrapping.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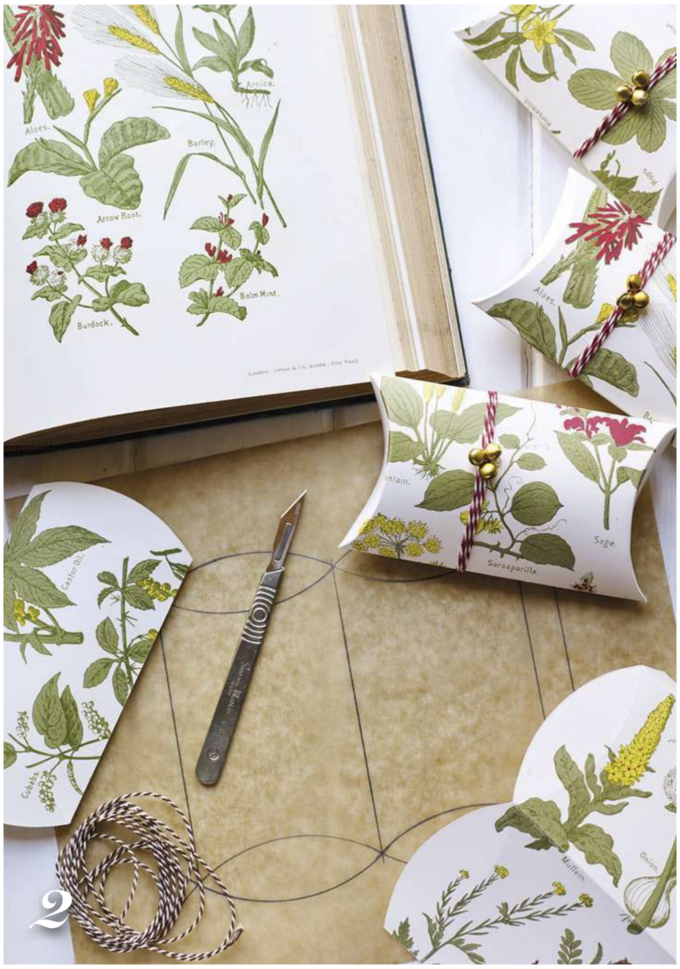
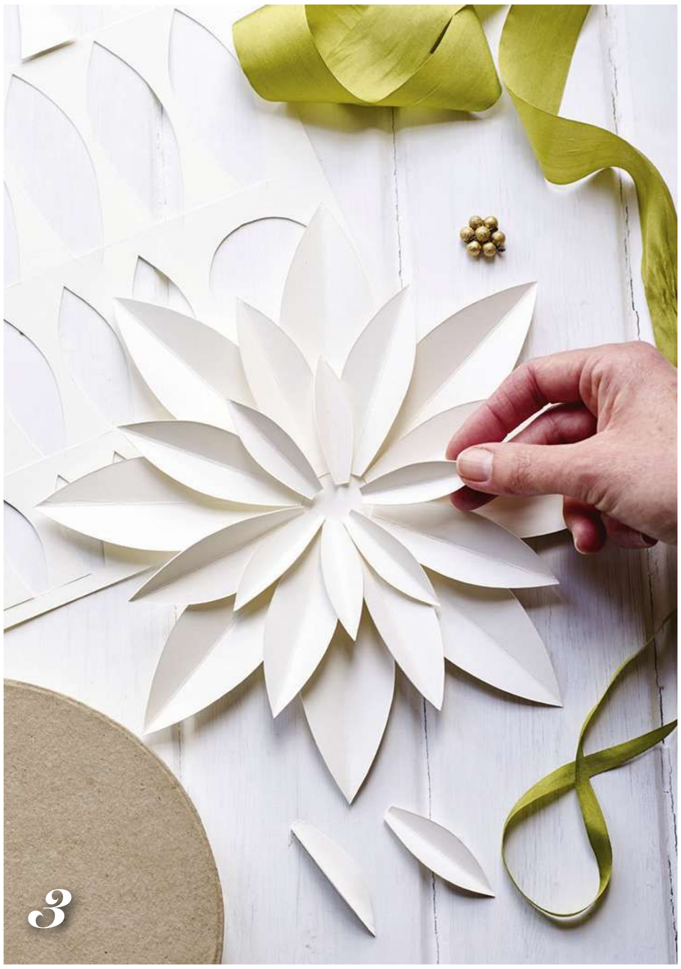

2
Aloes.
Barley.
Arnica.
Arrow Root.
Balm Mint.
Burdock.
Sage.
Sarsaparilla.
Castor Oil.
Cubebs.
Mullein.
Onion.



Sticking power

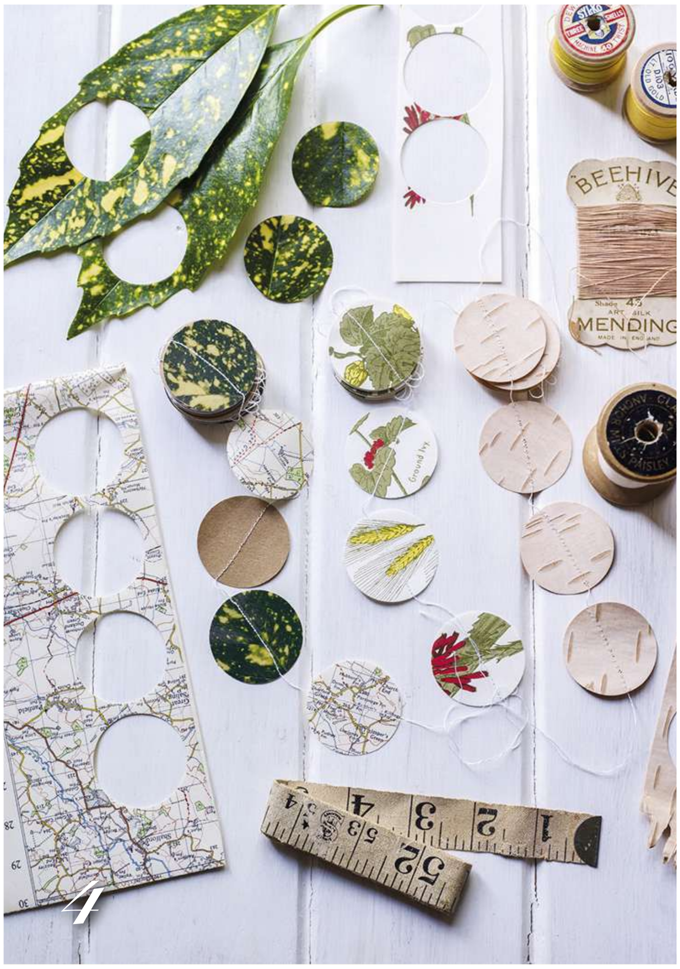
1 Natural names
Use large letter templates to attach over birch bark or *Aucuba japonica* 'Crotonifolia' leaves, then cut out with a scalpel. Use as gift tags and finish with a rosette made of photocopied vintage maps.

2 Herbalist pillow boxes
Using a template, cut box shapes from photocopied vintage botanical prints. Score and fold into shape. Bind in baker's twine and decorate with tiny brass jingle bells.

3 White card poinsettia
Cut a circle out of card along with eight large petals, eight medium petals and eight small ones. Fold in half lengthways and starting with the largest petals, stick them on to the circle using a glue gun, evenly spaced. Finally, wire some gold glittery beads together for the central cyathium. Looks good used to decorate a round box.

4 Botanical bunting
Using a hole-punch create circles from the left-over materials. Either group them together, or place them in sequence. Machine sew them together leaving about a finger's width between the circles. Wrap around presents as you would a ribbon. □

Find templates and stockist details at **gardensilustrated.com**


4
BEEHIVE
ART SILK
MENDING

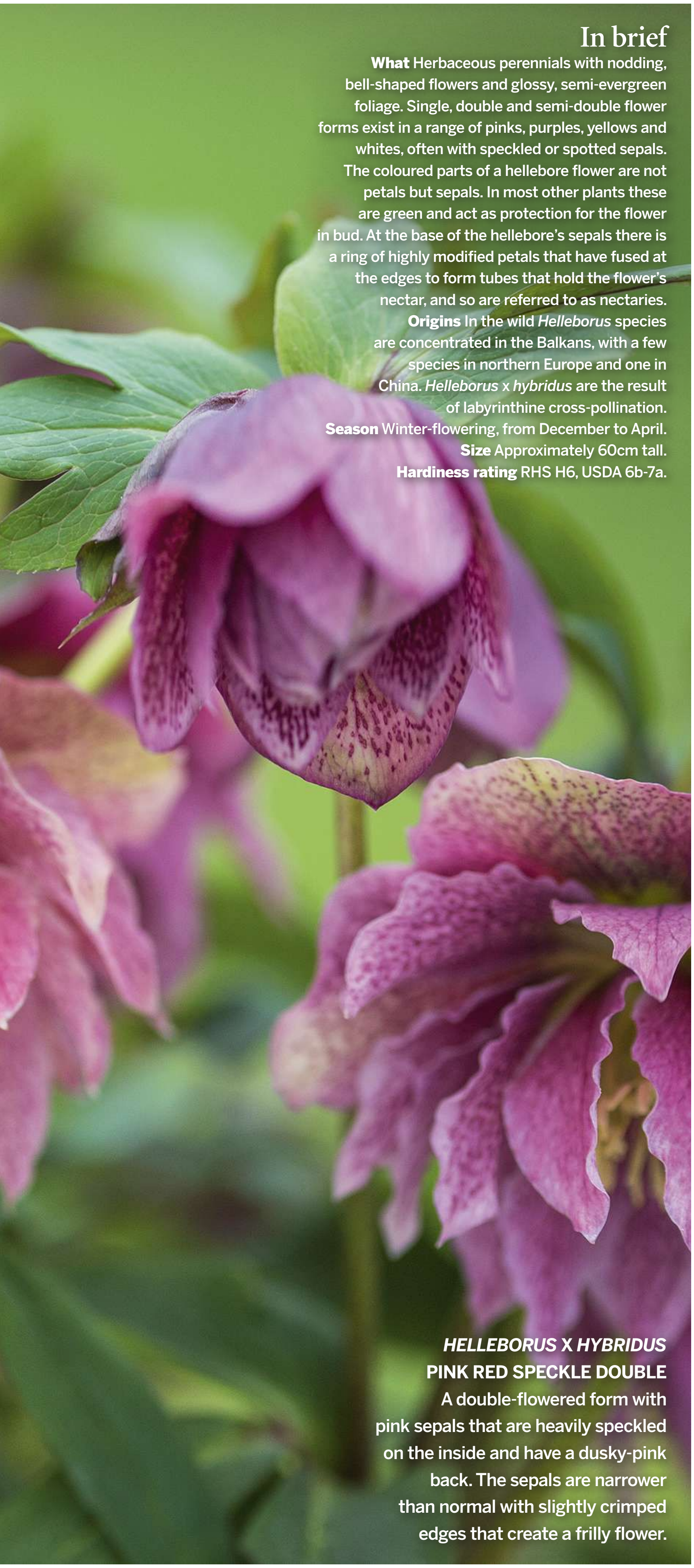
Lenten roses

Over the past 30 years the range of hybrid hellebores has become evermore alluring. Plantsman John Hoyland looks at some of the extraordinary new strains raised by Hertfordshire breeder Lorna Jones

WORDS **JOHN HOYLAND** PHOTOGRAPHS **RACHEL WARNE**

In brief

What Herbaceous perennials with nodding, bell-shaped flowers and glossy, semi-evergreen foliage. Single, double and semi-double flower forms exist in a range of pinks, purples, yellows and whites, often with speckled or spotted sepals. The coloured parts of a hellebore flower are not petals but sepals. In most other plants these are green and act as protection for the flower in bud. At the base of the hellebore's sepals there is a ring of highly modified petals that have fused at the edges to form tubes that hold the flower's nectar, and so are referred to as nectaries.
Origins In the wild *Helleborus* species are concentrated in the Balkans, with a few species in northern Europe and one in China. *Helleborus x hybridus* are the result of labyrinthine cross-pollination.
Season Winter-flowering, from December to April.
Size Approximately 60cm tall.
Hardiness rating RHS H6, USDA 6b-7a.



***HELLEBORUS X HYBRIDUS* PINK RED SPECKLE DOUBLE** A double-flowered form with pink sepals that are heavily speckled on the inside and have a dusky-pink back. The sepals are narrower than normal with slightly crimped edges that create a frilly flower.

John Hoyland is a plantsman and garden writer who has gardens in both southeast England and southwest France.

The breeding of hellebores is an activity that is developing so rapidly that plants whose flowers quite recently caused excitement can now seem dull and uninteresting. In a corner of my garden, tucked away under the shade of a walnut tree, is a hellebore whose purple-spotted white flowers 30 years ago thrilled me with their beauty. Now, in comparison with the exquisite flowers of modern hybrids, my one-time treasure looks drab, and only sentimental attachment guarantees it a continued place in the garden.

At the time, my plant was known as *Helleborus orientalis*, but so much breeding has taken place, and the details of most hellebore's parentage is so muddied, that they are now known as *Helleborus* x *hybridus*. The flowers of *Helleborus orientalis* available to gardeners tended to be a dull pink but in the 1960s nurserywoman Helen Ballard extended the colour range to include dark pinks and white, producing, at the same time, plants that were strong growing. During the 1970s and 1980s another formidable nurserywoman, Elizabeth Strangman, bred plants that had dark flowers or flowers that had dark-edged, petal-like sepals (see In brief, left), which have become known as picotee (from the French *picoter*, to speckle or to mark with various colours). Strangman also collected seed from plants growing in the wild, and in Montenegro came across plants of *Helleborus torquatus* that had double flowers, which she introduced into her breeding programme.

Other plant enthusiasts continued to breed evermore beautiful hellebores. Robin White of Blackthorn Nursery focused both on double-flowered forms and on those with spotted sepals; at Ashwood Nurseries in the West Midlands, John Massey and Kevin Belcher have produced an astonishing range of hellebores, in particular ones with strong colour on the reverse of the sepals and in Worcestershire Hugh Nunn, who formerly ran Harvington Hellebores, has a breeding

▷

▷ regime that produces seed strains consistent in their flower colour and vigour.

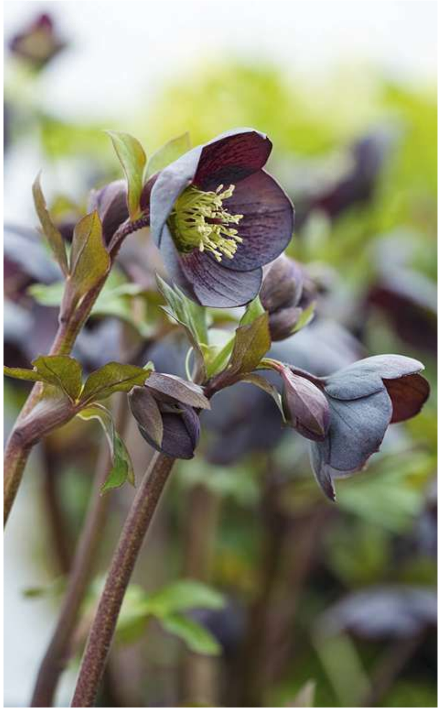
One of the latest links in this chain of hellebore breeders who, with passion, patience and imagination, are creating new forms of hellebore hybrids, is Lorna Jones in Hertfordshire. Lorna's interest in *Helleborus* x *hybridus* began more than 25 years ago and the initial motivation was to provide great plants for her own garden, with an emphasis on tall, early flowering plants that were disease resistant. One of the most sought-after types of hellebore are the so-called anemone forms, plants where the nectaries (see In brief, page 53) are enlarged to form a ring of small tubes at its centre. Lorna has been able to produce anemone forms where these nectaries are the same colour as the sepals, others that have picotee sepals and, most dramatically, forms that have nectaries that contrast with the sepals.

Lorna's entire breeding programme is now self-contained and all her breeding is done from plants that she already has in her collection. For a number of years she has been working on a form of the species *Helleborus torquatus* that produces masses of small, delicate flowers. Initially, it was neither robust nor vigorous but now, after years of painstaking work, Lorna has a breeding line that is both floriferous and strong-growing. The flowers of these hybrids are much smaller than their x *hybridus* cousins but they have a charm and an elegance that is irresistible.

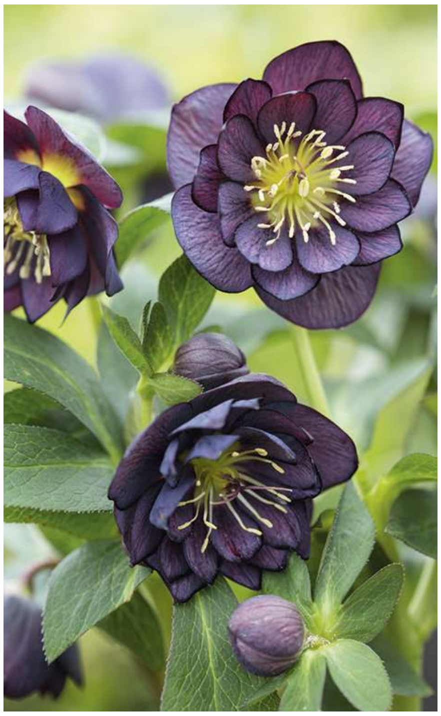
Some of the *Helleborus torquatus* hybrids have double flowers and hark back to the first double that Elizabeth Strangman found growing in the wild. Their sepals tend to be narrow and twisted, so Lorna has christened them 'spider' hellebores.

Lorna is aware that one of the attractions of these hybrid hellebores is that they sit comfortably in the garden and are plants that are companionable with other spring-flowering bulb and perennials. The danger of breeding programmes is that they can produce plants so flamboyant they no longer look at ease in the garden. Lorna has managed to avoid this and has succeeded in breeding beautiful plants with exquisite flowers that have lost none of the charm that attracted her to hellebores in the first place.

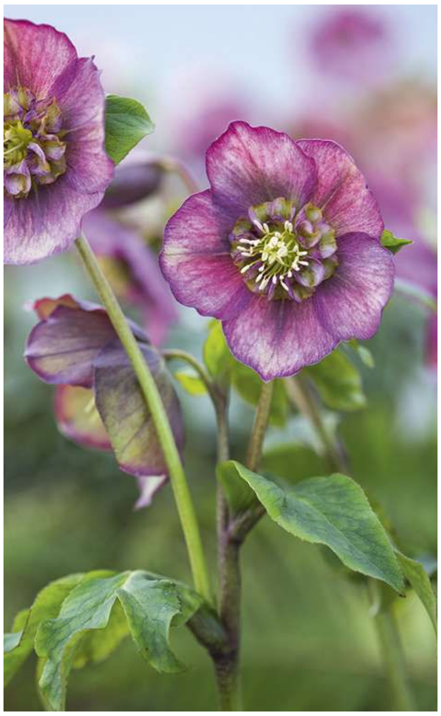
• Lorna's recommendations for hybrid hellebores continue over the next six pages.



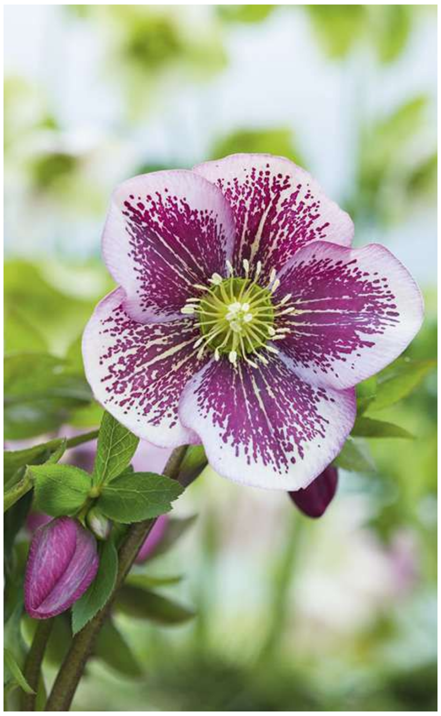
***HELLEBORUS* X *HYBRIDUS* SLATE BLUE**
A floriferous plant with simple, single flowers, with rounded, slate-coloured sepals that have a metallic-grey sheen. The stems and sepals have the same dusky hue as the flower.



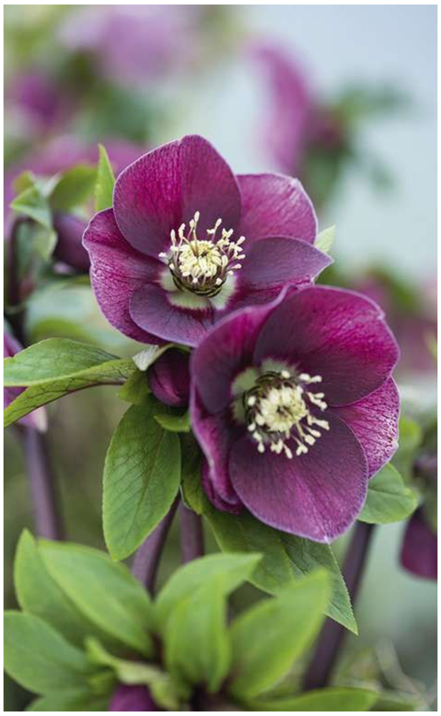
***H.* X *HYBRIDUS* PURPLE PICOTEE DOUBLE**
Almost-black buds open to double flowers with spoon-shaped sepals that are each edged in dark purple. The apple-green foliage enhances the deep colour of the flowers.



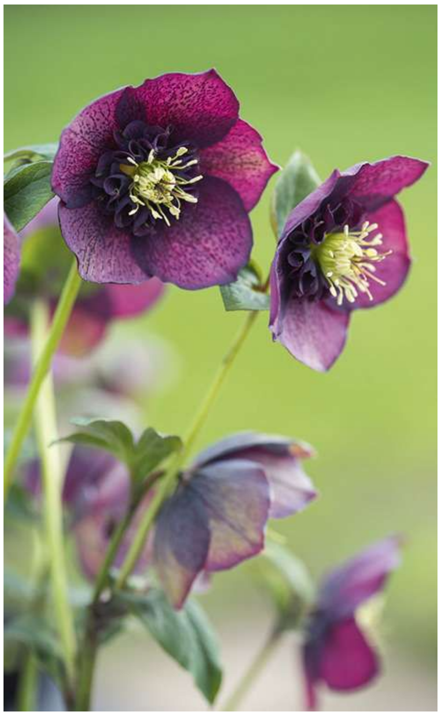
***H.* X *HYBRIDUS* ANTIQUE PURPLE PICOTEE**
Has purple-staining bleeds through each sepal, while the nectaries have a pale-green interior repeated on the back of the flower.



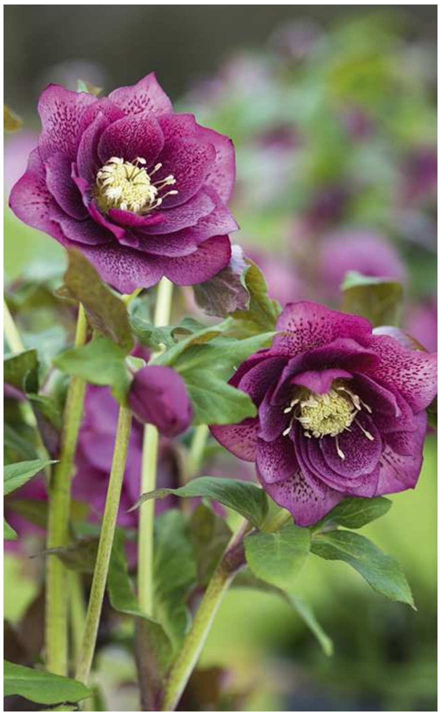
***H.* X *HYBRIDUS* PINK-SPOTTED**
A heavily spotted form that harks back to some of the earlier results of hellebore breeding. Unlike those, this plant has beautifully rounded, symmetrical sepals.



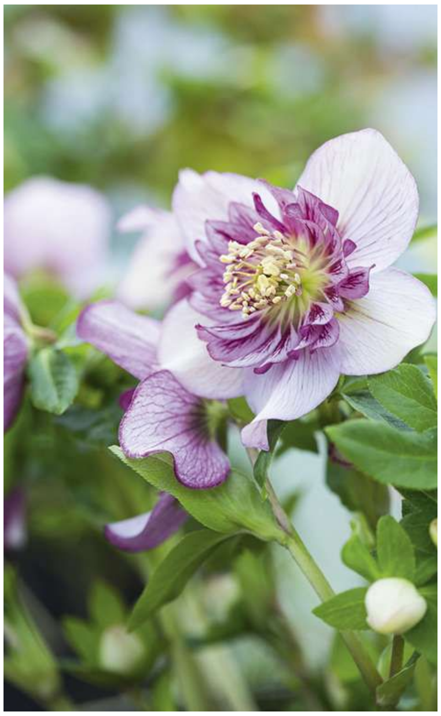
H. X HYBRIDUS PINK RED
Hellebore flowers described as red tend to be either a muddy pink or, like this form, a deep burgundy. One of Lorna's long-term aims is to breed a true red hellebore.



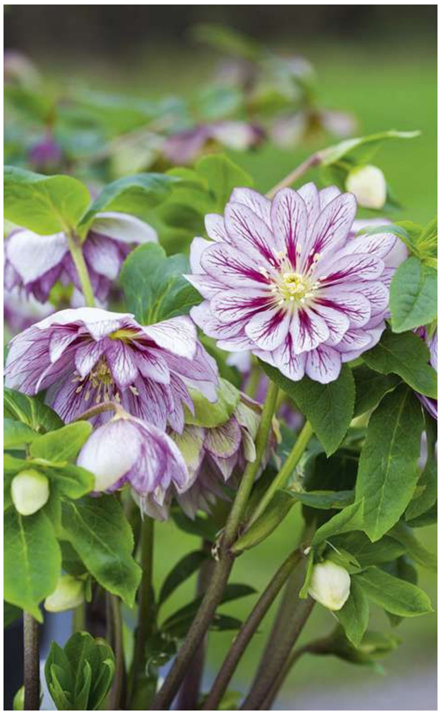
H. X HYBRIDUS PURPLE SPECKLE
The purple sepals are slightly pointed and are heavily mottled with dark purple. The enlarged nectaries create a dark ruff at the middle of the flower, known as an anemone centre.



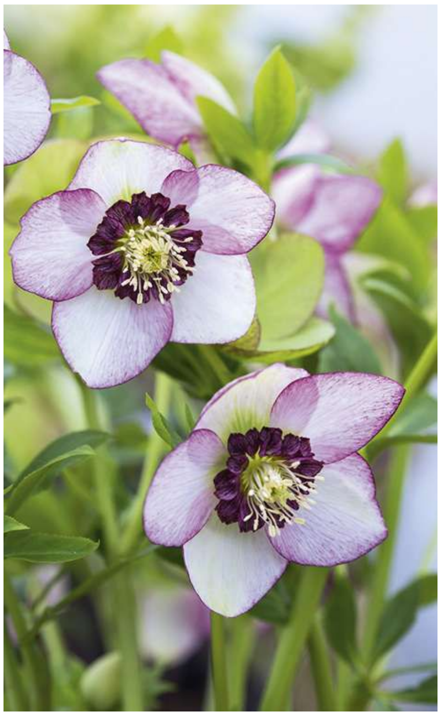
H. X HYBRIDUS PINK SPECKLE DOUBLE
A richly coloured, double flower with pink, pointed sepals, heavily speckled with purple. The multiple rows of short sepals create an open, rose-like flower.



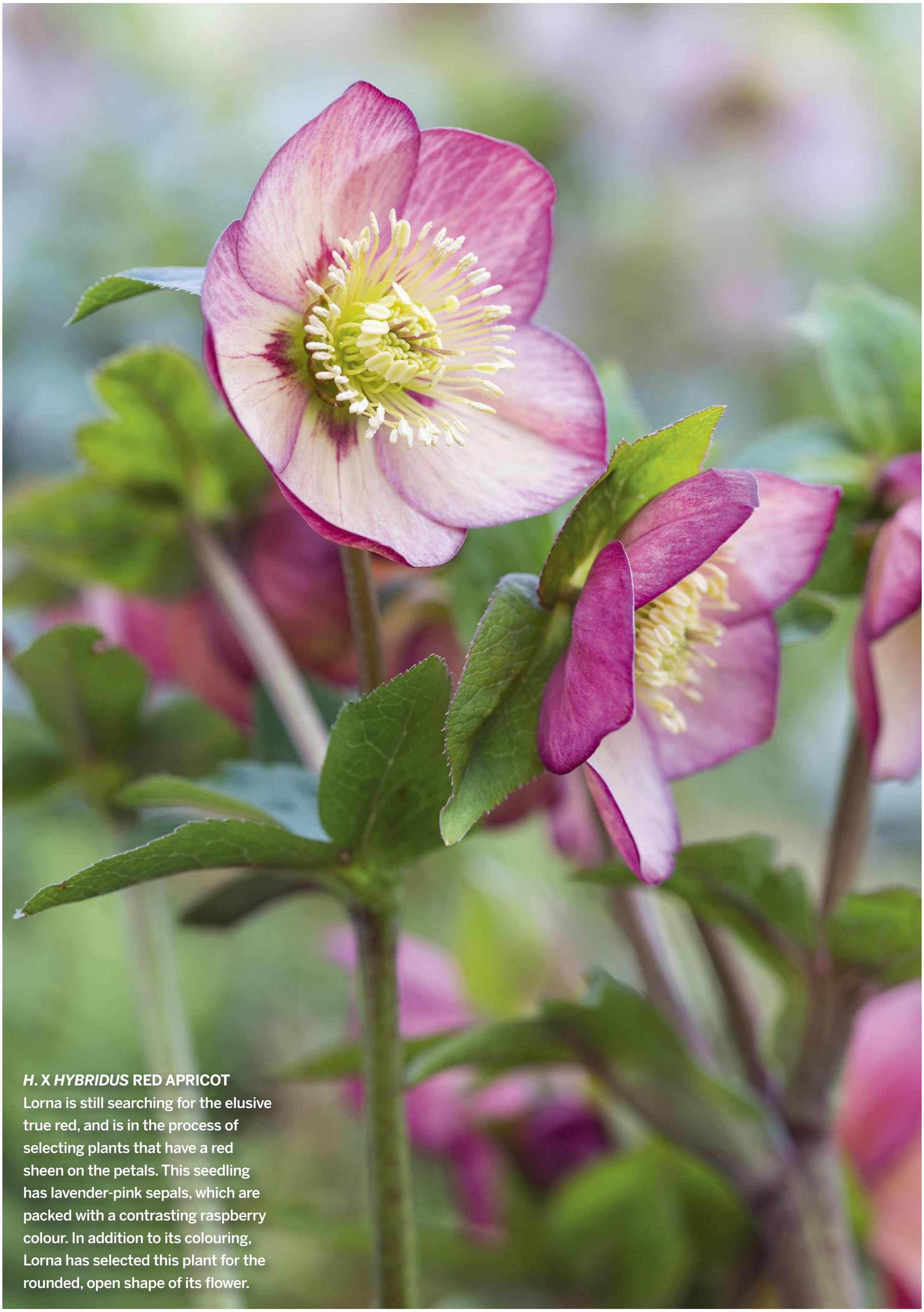
H. X HYBRIDUS PICOTEE SEMI-DOUBLE
Pale-pink sepals fold back flat to reveal a frill of small, narrow sepals. The smaller sepals and the back of the flower have dark-pink veining.



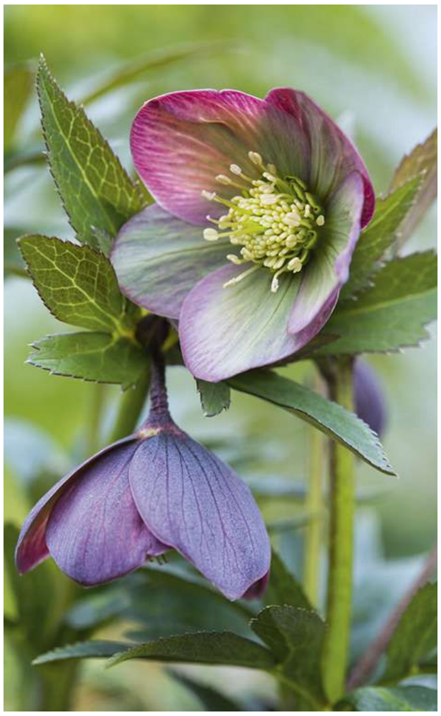
H. X HYBRIDUS DOUBLE PICOTEE VEINING
A plant with attractive double flowers that are formed of narrow sepals. Each sepal is edged raspberry pink and has the same colour veining.



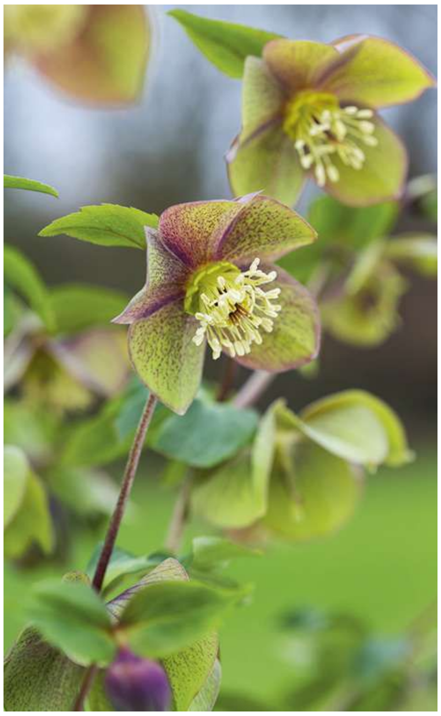
H. X HYBRIDUS PICOTEE ANEMONE
The purple outline on the pale sepals gently bleeds away from the edges. At the centre, the contrasting, dark-purple nectaries have the texture of silk.



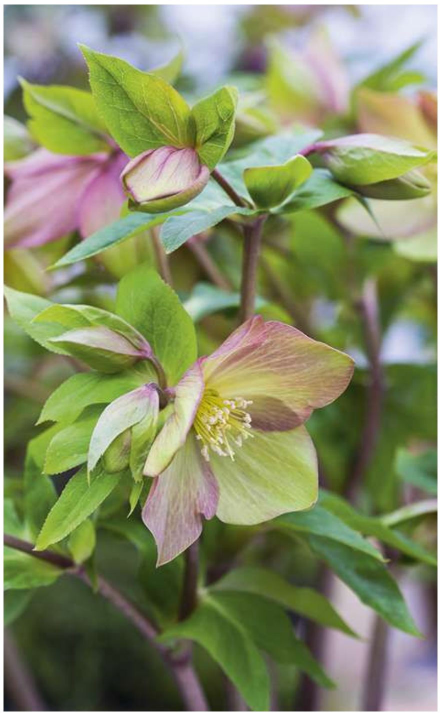
***H.* X *HYBRIDUS* RED APRICOT**
Lorna is still searching for the elusive true red, and is in the process of selecting plants that have a red sheen on the petals. This seedling has lavender-pink sepals, which are packed with a contrasting raspberry colour. In addition to its colouring, Lorna has selected this plant for the rounded, open shape of its flower.



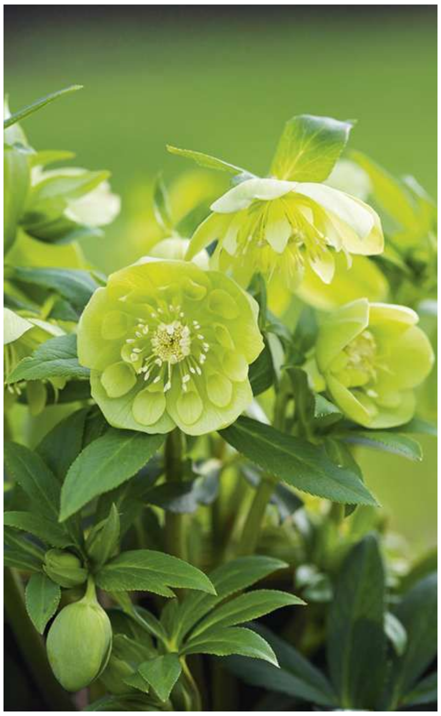
H. *TORQUATUS* HYBRID
Helleborus torquatus was used to breed the earliest dark-purple flowers. Lorna's selection has grape-coloured flowers that have a green sheen on the inside of the sepals.



H. *VIRIDIS* SUBSP. *OCCIDENTALIS* HYBRID
A delicate form with small flowers that are just 2.5cm in diameter and appear before most *Helleborus* x *hybridus* flower. The green sepals are speckled with pink.



H. X *HYBRIDUS* TOFFEE GREEN
This incredibly delicate form is an unusual colour combination of pink and green flowers that open from green buds. The plant produces masses of flowers.



H. X *HYBRIDUS* GREEN SEMI-DOUBLE
A compact, cup-shaped flower with apple-green sepals that have a second row of smaller, spoon-shaped petals. Lorna describes the form as being semi-double.

Cultivation

In the wild most hellebores grow under the canopy provided by deciduous trees and shrubs, and this is the ideal place for them in the garden. Although they will tolerate sunny situations they grow best in places that are shaded from midday sun. Avoid deep shade, however, as this will inhibit the plants from flowering. *Helleborus* x *hybridus* are amenable plants that will grow both in light, sandy soils and in heavy, clay soils, as long as the soil is rich in organic matter. Hellebores are deep rooted so dig a hole about one-and-a-half times the height of a spade and incorporate plenty of humus in the form of well-rotted manure, leaf mould, mushroom compost or home-made compost. During their first year, keep the plants well-watered and mulch them with compost each autumn.

Helleborus x *hybridus* are evergreen but their leaves do die back and should be removed. Remove diseased leaves as soon as possible, cutting them back to the base of the stalk, and remove the previous season's dying leaves in December. This allows air and light into the centre of the plant and will encourage healthy flowers.

Hellebores produce masses of seedlings. Weed out any that seed themselves into the crown of the parent plant, otherwise they may smother it. Black or dark-brown blotches occasionally appear on the leaves. This is a fungal infection that is encouraged by damp conditions. Remove the leaves as soon as you spot the problem and burn them – don't put them in the compost bin as this will spread the disease.

Breeding

Because most *Helleborus* x *hybridus* plants are grown from seed, it is not possible to give them specific cultivar names. Some breeders pollinate their plants in environments that exclude pollinating insects and so can have a high level of confidence that seedlings will have a particular flower's colour or shape. These plants are often sold as being a particular seed strain or given generic descriptions, such as Ashwood double claret shades or Harvington single apricots. The descriptions of the hybrids shown here are from Lorna Jones's nursery Hertfordshire Hellebores. Even though Lorna's hand-pollinated breeding programme results in plants with similar characteristics, every seedling will produce different flowers. The only way to be absolutely sure that you are getting the flower-colour and type, foliage shape and plant habit that you want is to buy hellebores when they are in flower.

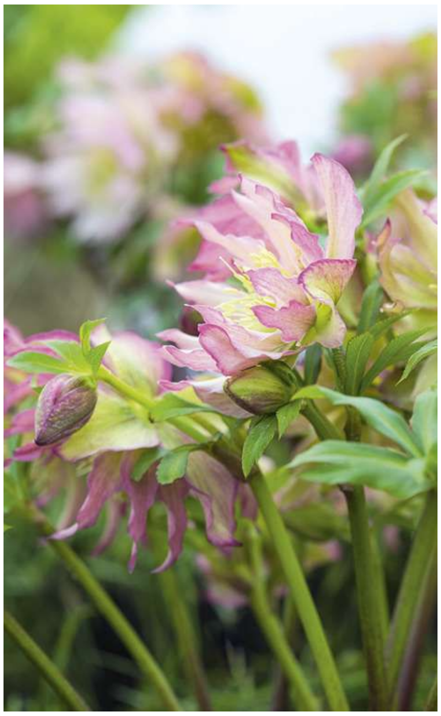
Recently, micropropagation has been used to produce some named hybrids. *Helleborus* (Rodney Davey Marbled Group) 'Anna's Red', for example, is a sterile hybrid resulting from crossing *Helleborus niger* and *Helleborus lividus* with *Helleborus* x *hybridus* and all plants sold under this name will be identical.

Micropropagation of hellebores is slower and more expensive than producing plants from seed so it is unlikely that many named hybrids will be produced this way.

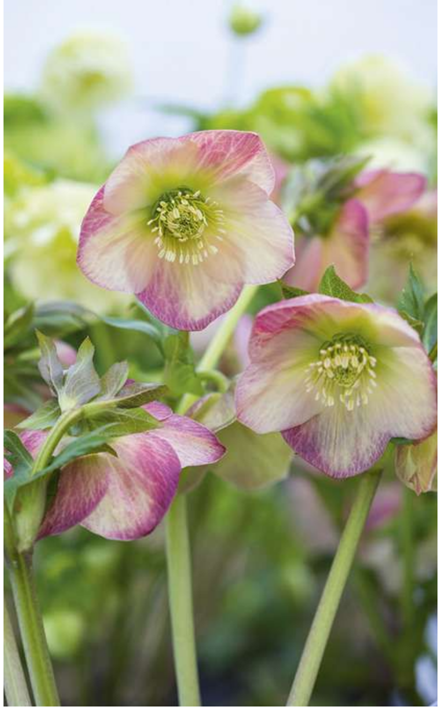
Where to see and buy

The forms shown here are from Hertfordshire Hellebores, other suppliers listed also offer an interesting range of colours and shapes.

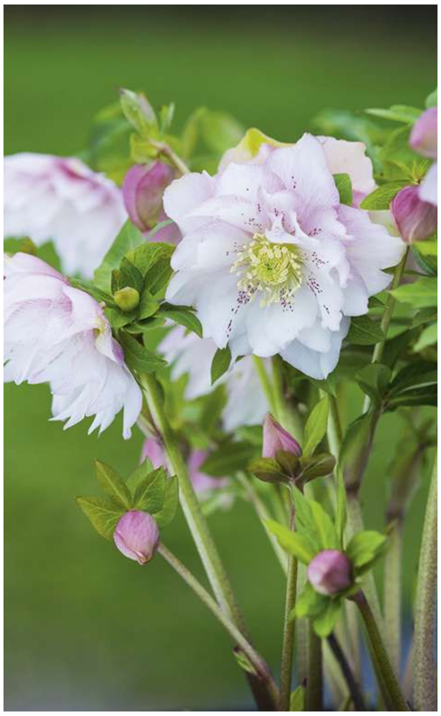
- **Ashwood Nurseries**
  Ashwood Lower Lane,
  Ashwood, Kingswinford,
  West Midlands DY6 0AE.
  Tel 01384 401996,
  ashwoodnurseries.com
- **Hazles Cross Farm Nursery**
  Hollins Lane, Kingsley,
  Staffordshire ST10 2EP.
  Tel 01538 752669,
  hazlescrossfarmnursery.co.uk
  National Collection holder.
- **Hertfordshire Hellebores**
  Green Lane Farm, Levens Green,
  Ware, Hertfordshire SG11 1HD.
  Tel 01920 438458,
  herts-hellebore.co.uk
  Open days 8 February and 8 March 2017. See website for more dates.
- **Twelve Nunns**
  twelvenunns.co.uk
  Suppliers of Harvington Hellebores.
  Mail order only.



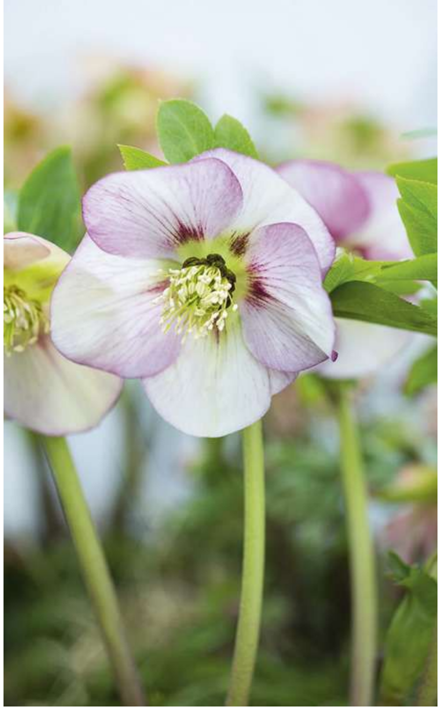
***H. TORQUATUS* HYBRID SPIDER DOUBLE**
An unusual flower with several rows of narrow, twisting sepals to create what Lorna has dubbed 'spider hellebores'. In this form the creamy-white sepals have a pale-pink back.



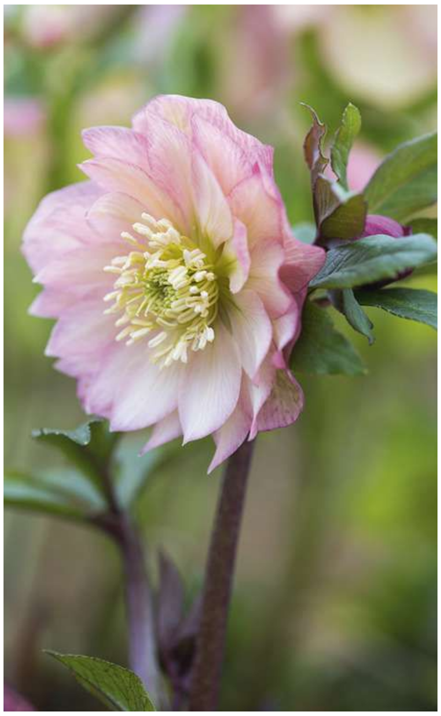
***H.* X *HYBRIDUS* APRICOT**
Producing plants that consistently have the same shaped flowers is one of the aims of Lorna's breeding programme. Here, flowers are all rounded and saucer shaped.



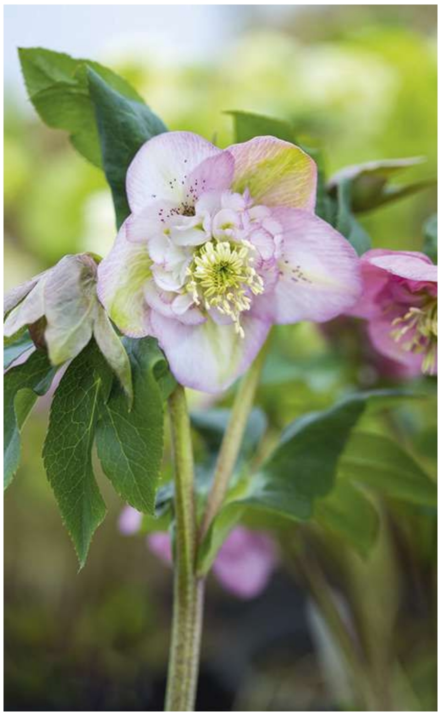
***H.* X *HYBRIDUS* APPLE BLOSSOM DOUBLE**
A floriferous plant that produces lots of white, double flowers, which appear from dusky-pink buds. The bright-white sepals are lightly sprinkled with tiny purple spots.



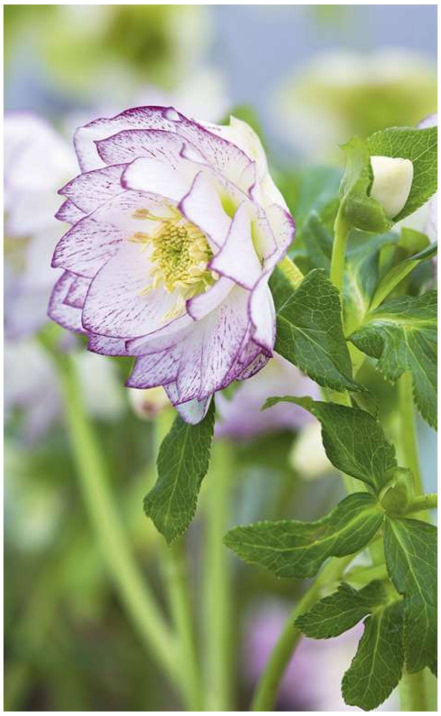
***H.* X *HYBRIDUS* PICOTEE**
The lavender-pink outline of the sepals bleeds through towards the centre of the flower. The stippling at the base of the sepals is reflected in the colour of the nectaries.



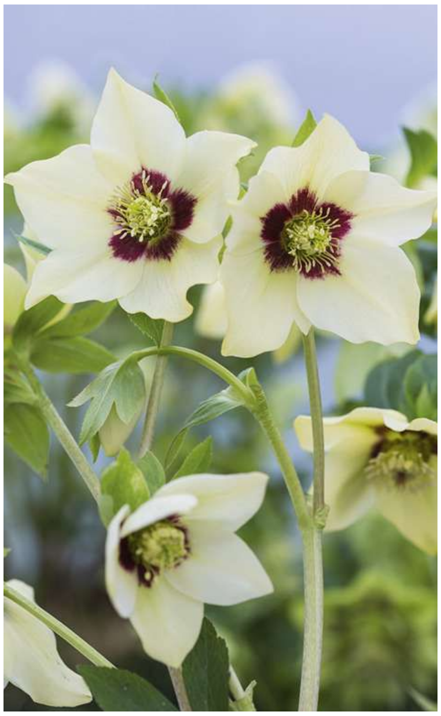
***H.* X *HYBRIDUS* APRICOT DOUBLE**
Sepals grow flat against the back of the flower to create an open, rounded shape. The pink hue on the almond-white petals harmonises beautifully with the dark stems.



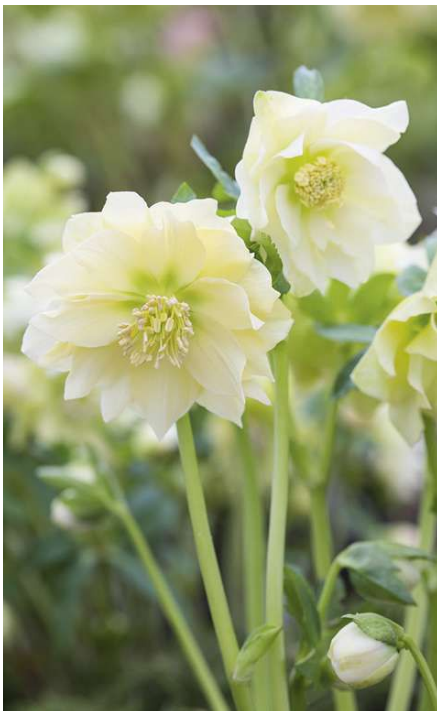
***H.* X *HYBRIDUS* APPLE BLOSSOM ANEMONE**
Apple blossom-pink sepals, speckled with purple and streaked with green, combine with the white anemone centre to striking effect.



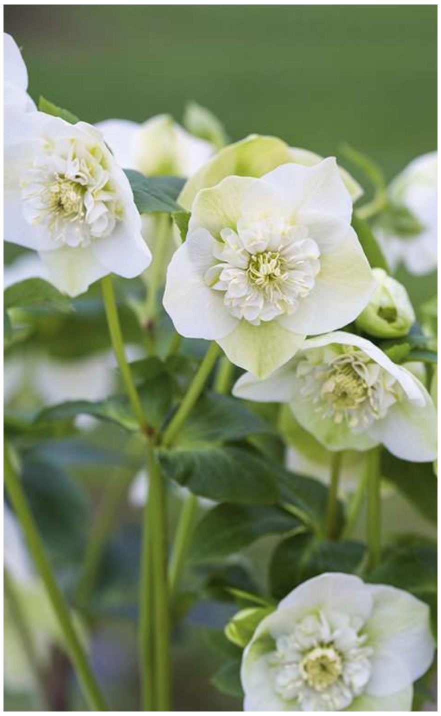
***H.* X *HYBRIDUS* PALE PICOTEE DOUBLE**
Several rows of overlapping, white, pointed sepals that are faintly edged in a purple shade that combines beautifully with the green of the leaves. A sparklingly bright, elegant flower.



***H.* X *HYBRIDUS* YELLOW DARK BLOTCH**
The pointed, creamy-white sepals form a star-shaped flower. The dark-maroon blotches at the base of the sepals create a startling contrast.



***H.* X *HYBRIDUS* YELLOW DOUBLE**
A creamy-white, double flower with a subtle trace of pale, apple green at the base of the sepals. The flower has an elegance that is the hallmark of many of Lorna's plants.



***H.* X *HYBRIDUS* WHITE ANEMONE**
An anemone-centred form with white sepals and white nectaries. The slight hint of green on some of the sepals enhances the brightness of the white.

MANY THANKS TO HERTFORDSHIRE HELLEBORES WHERE THESE IMAGES WERE TAKEN.

Jim Gardiner

The outgoing RHS executive vice president, on his passion for music and magnolias, his struggles with Militant, and why his new neighbours might want to invest in ear plugs

WORDS JODIE JONES PORTRAIT CHARLIE HOPKINSON

When Jim Gardiner was 11 years old, his mother took delivery of a tree peony. "It was a golden-yellow *Paeonia lutea* var *ludlowii*. She took it out of the crate and I was smitten. I knew from that moment that I wanted to be a gardener." Fifty five years later, he is on the brink of retirement from the position of RHS executive vice president after a lifetime in horticulture.

It was not an obvious career choice for Jim to make, even though his mother was a keen amateur gardener. Both his parents were aero-engineers but he says, "I was fortunate that they encouraged me to follow my own path." Straight out of school, he secured a place on the prestigious two-year apprenticeship programme at the Royal Gardens Windsor. "Within a week I knew I was in the right place," he recalls. "I loved the work, but I also loved the life. Whenever I could, I used to head up to the Marquee Club [the legendary London music venue] where I saw Jeff Beck, John Mayall & the Bluesbreakers, all the musical greats."

The other passion to emerge at this time was for magnolias. "There is an excellent collection at Windsor and I was instantly drawn to the size, scale and poise of this magnificent genus." Since then he has written several authoritative monographs on magnolias, and became the first non-American president of the Magnolia Society International. "What an honour that was."

From Windsor, he joined the diploma course at Askham Bryan College with a year out at the Cambridge University Botanic Garden, where he consolidated his mastery of the basics of horticulture. "I'm what the Americans call a dirt gardener. Wherever you end up, you have to learn the nuts and bolts first."

As his diploma course was ending, in 1973, Jim heard there was an opening at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh for a garden supervisor. He was responsible for propagation and seed sowing, which appealed to the 'dirt' gardener within him, but he also joined the Botanical Society of Edinburgh, relished the cultural life around the Festival and met the girl who has been his wife for over 40 years.

"Allison and I had a wonderful quality of life in Edinburgh, but I was waiting to fill dead men's shoes," recalls Jim. Instead, he made a bold move to Wavertree Botanic Gardens in Liverpool as curator. "It was quite a different kettle of fish. Apart from anything, it was run by a city council in the throes of political upheaval [the Trotskyist group Militant were about to take control of the council]. It was quite exciting really," he says with masterly understatement.

"The Militant left didn't see the value of our plants, but we had one of the finest glasshouse collections in the country and many excellent people. I like cultivating people. Without people we wouldn't have plant collections."

He spent four years in the city, then jumped down south to join the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens, in the comfortable Home Counties. At Hilliers, no one questioned the value of plants, but Jim put his energies into developing the arboretum as a visitor attraction and a resource for schools. It was an emphasis that was to stand him in good stead when, another four years down the line, he was tempted to move again. "The position of curator at Wisley came up and I had to give it a go."

With his emphasis on people and places, as much as plants, he instigated a five-year strategic plan for the gardens, commissioned Piet Oudolf to design some daringly contemporary borders, and set about providing visitors with as full a range of horticultural experiences as possible. "I wanted there to be something for everyone," he says.

During his tenure there has been a constant series of innovations and visitor figures have more than doubled, but the achievement he is most proud of is the glasshouse. "It was hard persuading people that Wisley should have a glasshouse of international importance, but it's clear now that the £8.8 million cost represented good value for money." Not only was the structure innovative, so was the use Jim made of it. From the Root Zone, which shows how important the parts of a plant under the ground are, to the annual butterfly festival, which massively increases winter visitor numbers, the project has been an unqualified success.

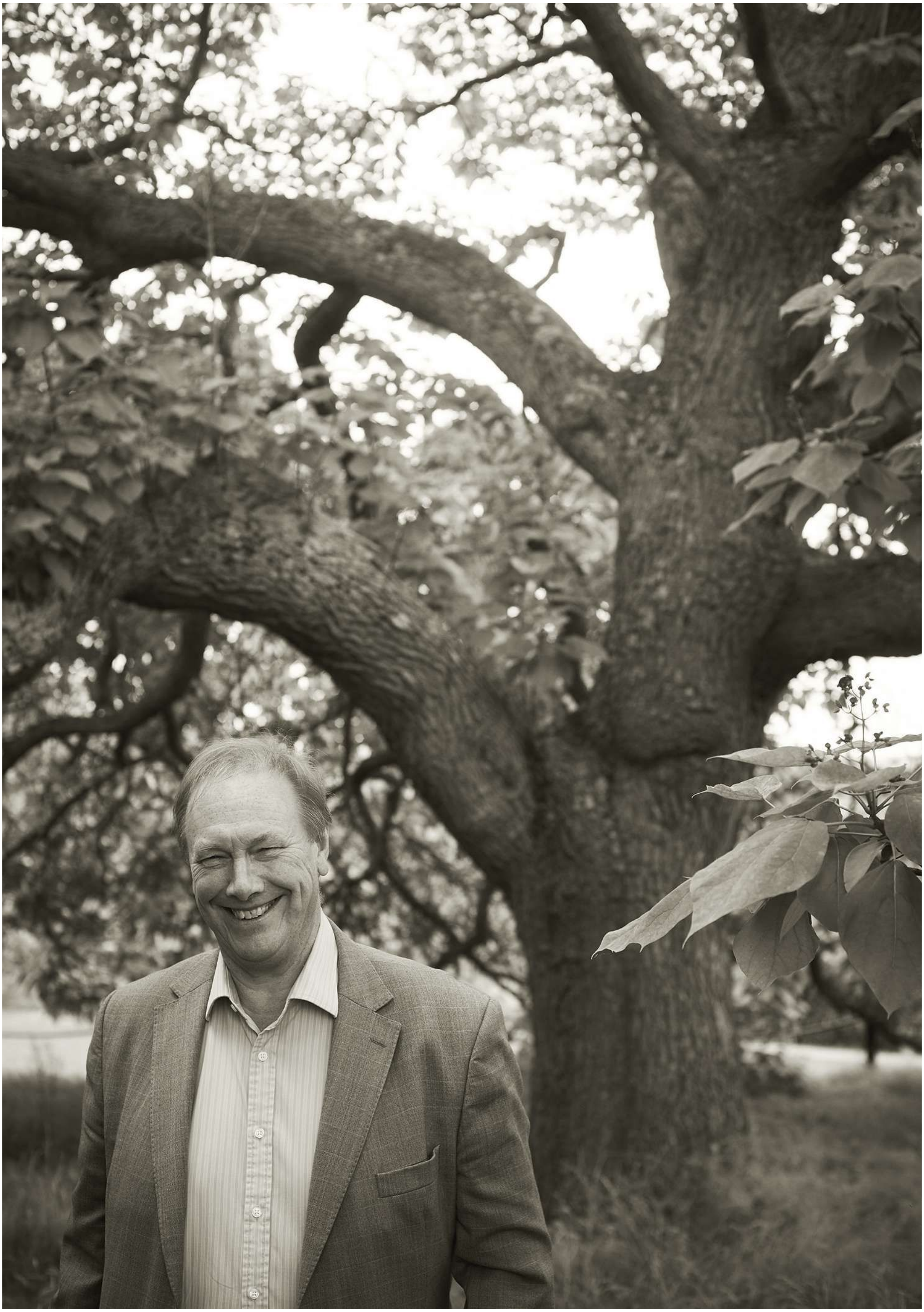
Now he is leaving just as Christopher Bradley-Hole is overhauling the whole garden, but he has no regrets. "I'm looking forward to spending time with my grandchildren. I'll be helping Borde Hill gardens develop their magnolia collection. And I'd like to be on one of the RHS plant committees, although everyone gets there on merit so I'll have to see if I make it."

He has just one concern. "I like playing my music very loudly," he admits. "Living in the gardens at Wisley, there was no one to disturb, but now we are moving I'm going to have to be careful not to annoy my new neighbours." □

USEFUL INFORMATION
RHS Garden Wisley, Woking, Surrey GU23 6QB. Tel 0845 260 9000, rhs.org.uk/gardens/wisley. Open daily, Monday-Friday 10am-6pm, weekends and bank holidays 9am-6pm. Admission £14.50.

IN THE JANUARY ISSUE Landscape architect James Corner.

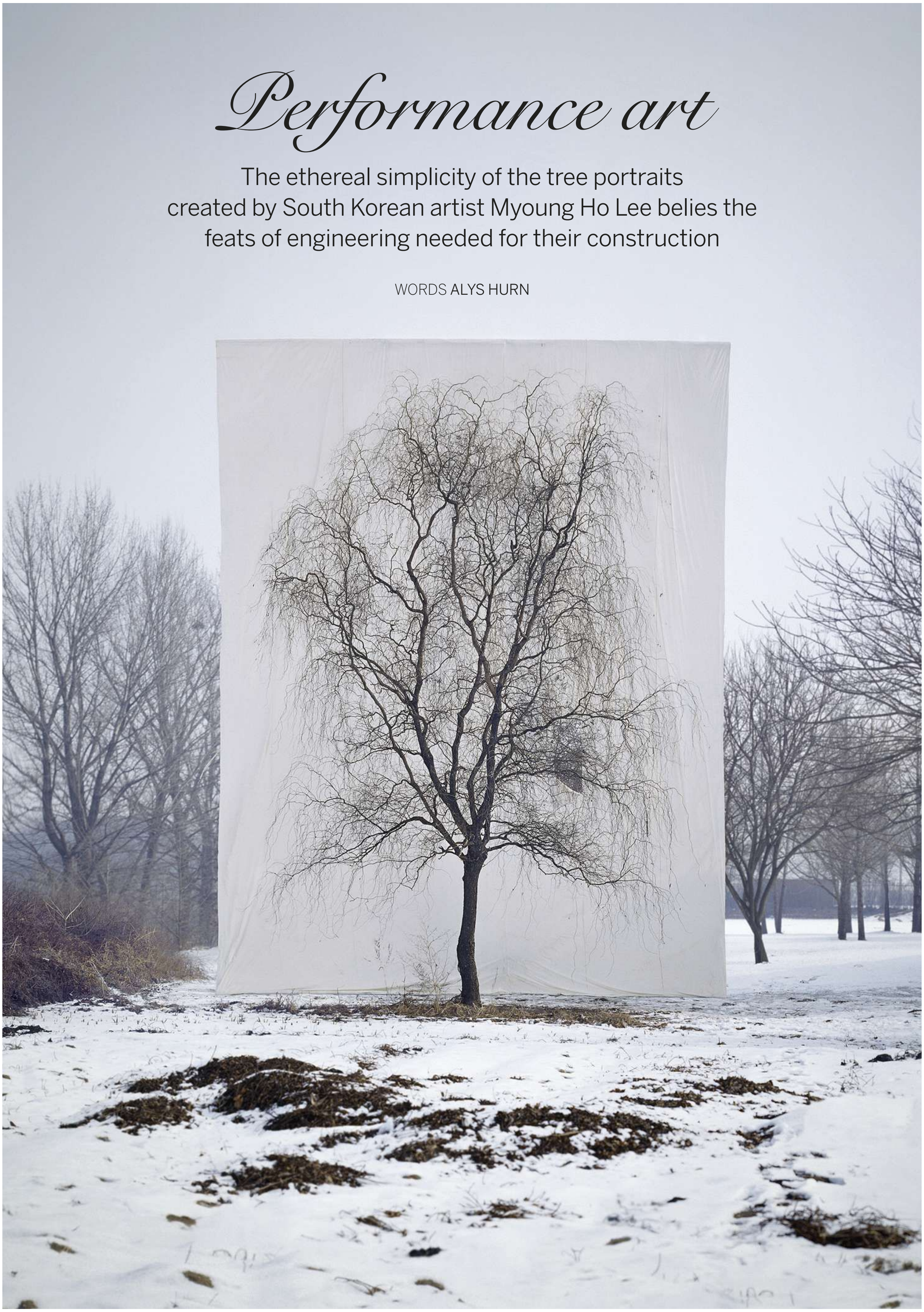
> *"I'm what the Americans call a dirt gardener. Wherever you end up, you have to learn the nuts and bolts first"*

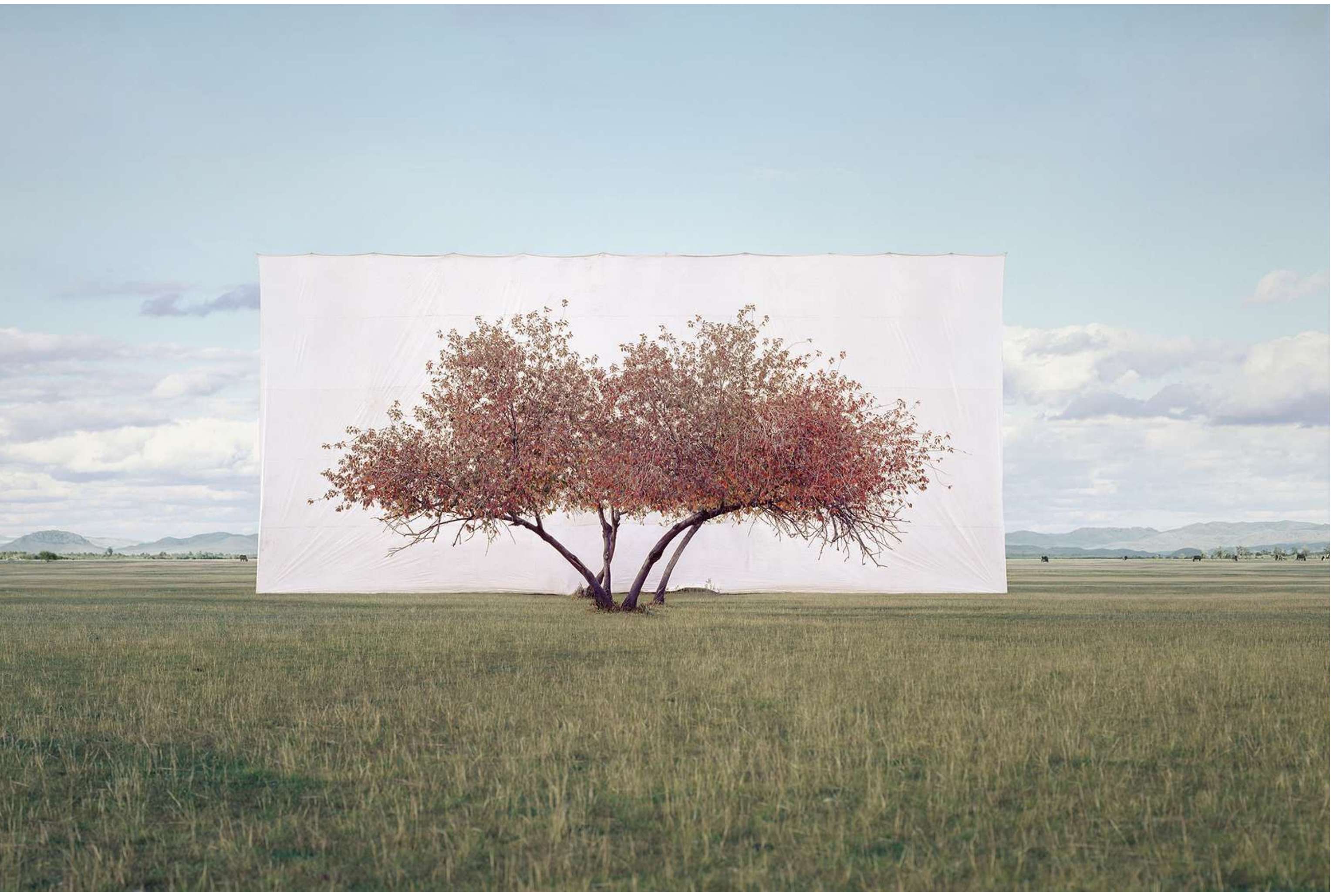


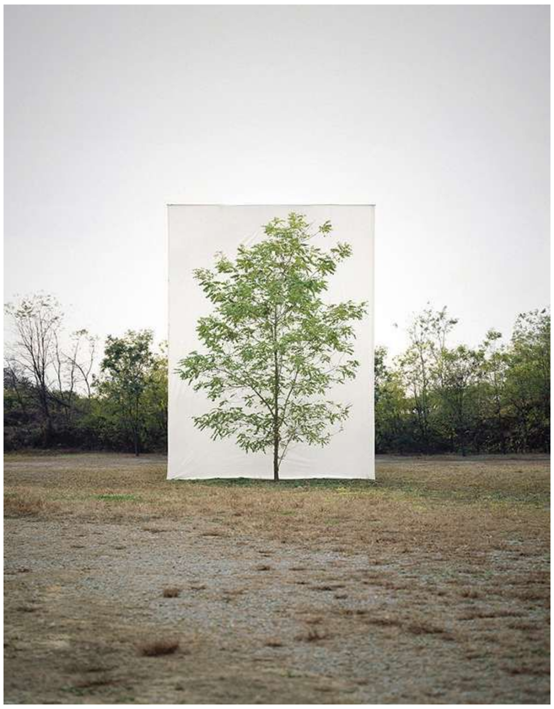
Performance art

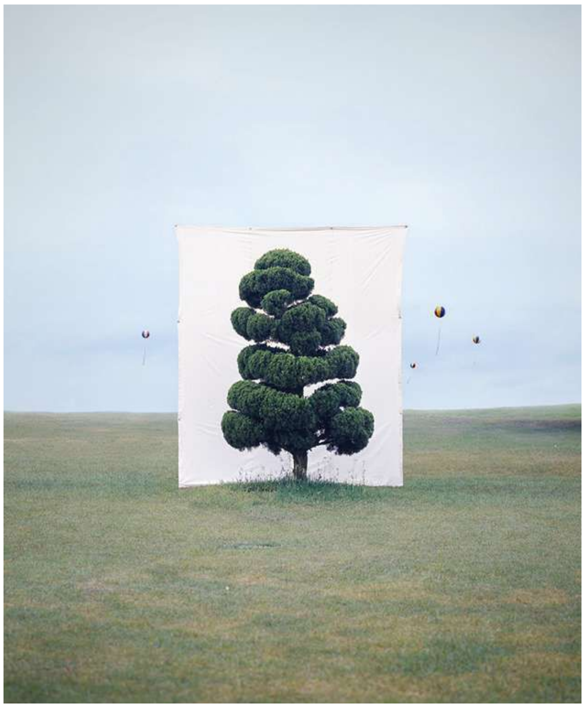
The ethereal simplicity of the tree portraits created by South Korean artist Myoung Ho Lee belies the feats of engineering needed for their construction

WORDS ALYS HURN









MYOUNG HO LEE, COURTESY YOSSI MILO GALLERY, NEW YORK

Left Before photographing each tree, Myoung Ho observes it over the course of a year to decide on the best time to take his photograph. This portrait, *Tree #3*, 2006, captures the stark beauty of winter near Seoul, South Korea. **Top** The empty expanse of the Mongolian landscape behind *Tree… #2*, 2011 emphasises its shape and autumn hues. **Above left** In *Tree #9*, 2006, the blank canvas serves to foreground the beauty of the foliage and isolate it from its ordinary surroundings. **Above right** Balloons, echoing the rounded branches of the *Podocarpus macrophyllus*, add a playfully surreal touch to *Tree #2,* 2006.

“Why not take the canvas out of the studio and let nature paint on it?”

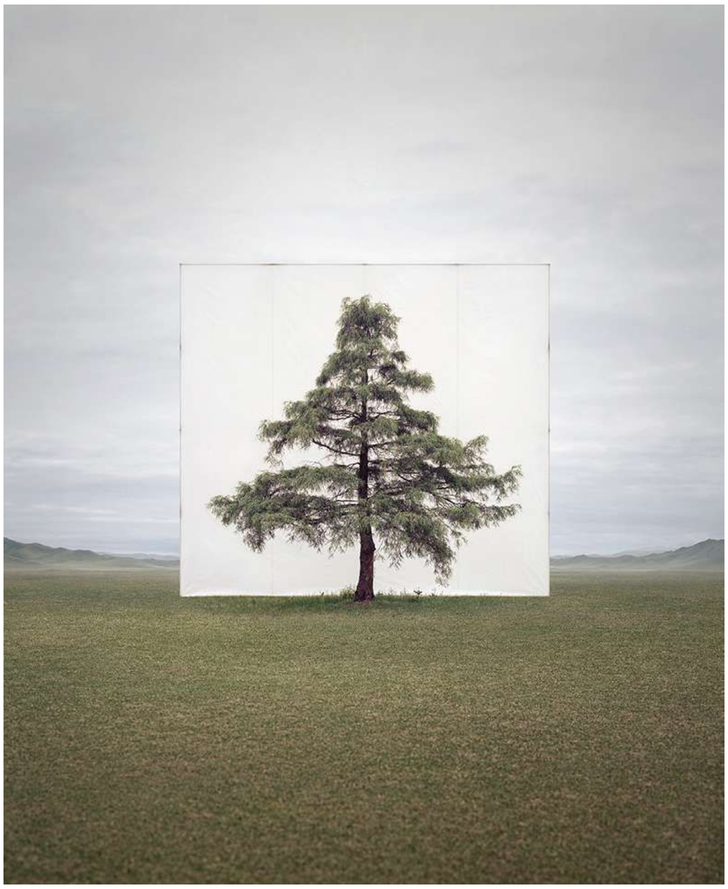
South Korean artist Myoung Ho Lee repeatedly asks himself the question, ‘what is art?’ It is the inspiration for all his work and it was the starting point for the atmospheric *Tree* series he started back in 2006. “I like walking slowly,” he explains. “Then I start to absorb my surroundings as if I am a sponge. As an artist, it is the time when the question ‘what is art?’ becomes an empty white canvas.”

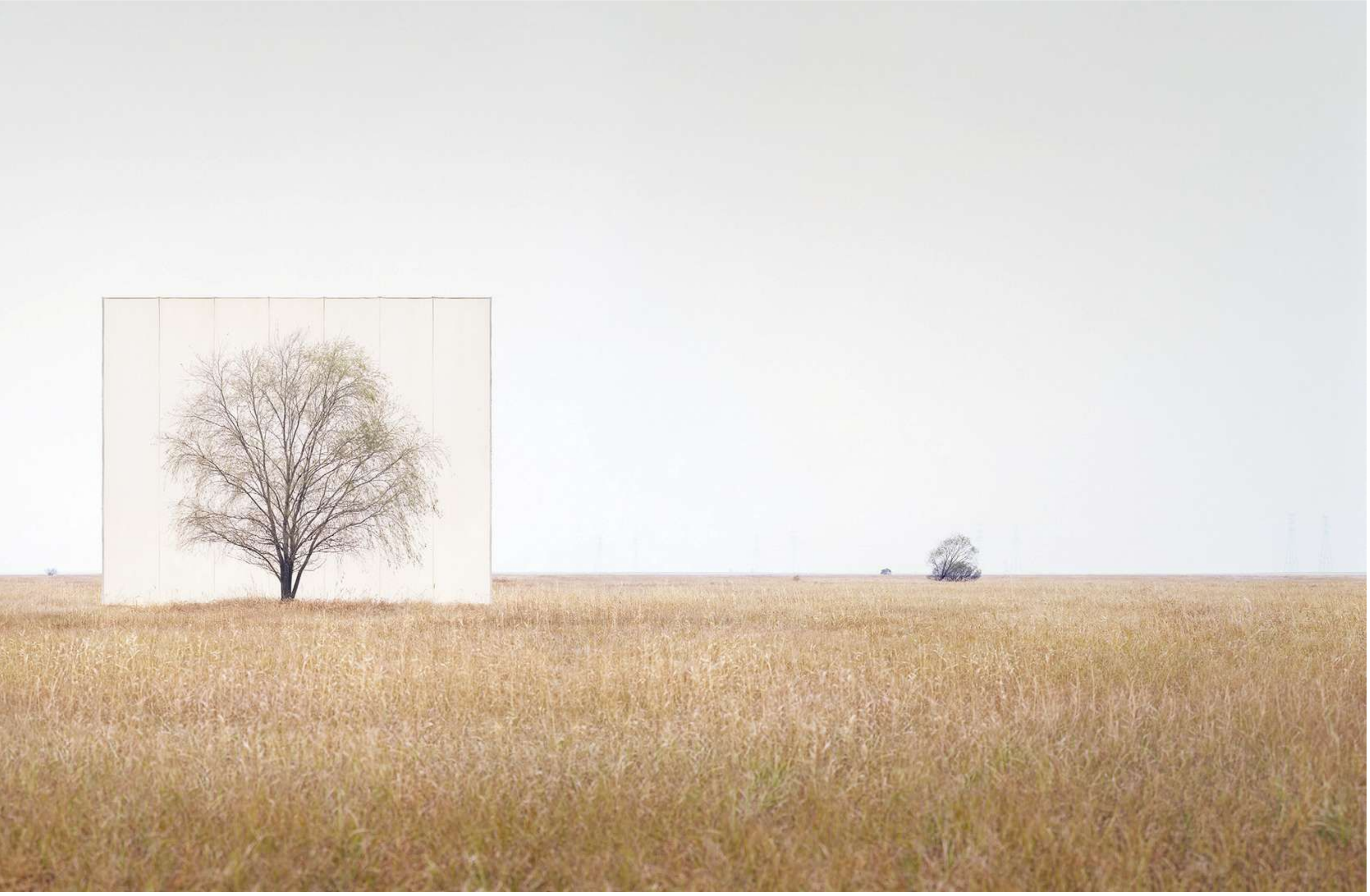
Myoung Ho, who captured trees in South Korea for his first series, *Tree* and subsequently all over the world for his second, titled *Tree…* uses the white canvas as an active component in all his portraits. He says, “Why not take the blank canvas out [of the studio] and let nature paint on it? Instead of drawing on canvas, the concept here is to engage the canvas into the real subject.” By taking the canvas ‘out’ and using it as a backdrop to his photographs, Myoung Ho draws attention to the existing, natural forms of art that, in our busy day-to-day lives, are easy to pass by. Trees are his medium of choice because they are so embedded in our everyday environment and by capturing them in this unique way he can bring them to the fore. “There are so many things that exist in this world, each with its own meaning, and I believe there isn’t anything more important or less important,” he explains. “What I do is find the values of those existences and show them to people.”

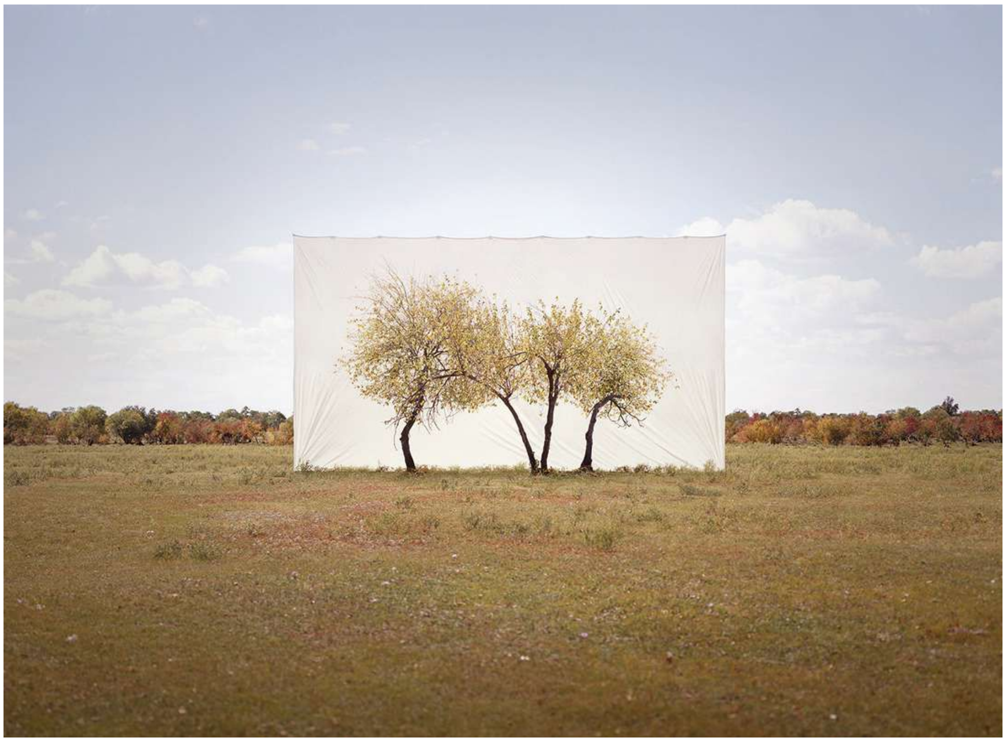
Setting up the portraits is a complex process. Cranes and a large-scale crew are needed to install each bespoke canvas, which is custom made to suit the size of the tree, but are generally in the region of 10 x 20m. The smallest breeze can cause the canvas to ripple so iron rods are inserted at the top and the bottom of the sheet and between eight and 12 crew members hold the ropes attached to the canvas to help keep it in place. A minimum amount of retouching is needed post-shot to remove the supportive materials from the final image.

Masking the work that goes on behind the scenes brings these seemingly simple portraits close to the boundary of what is real and what isn’t. In doing so, Myoung Ho prompts opinion and interpretation, and for him that is the most important part of the artistic process. “I think an artist is an examiner who makes a question without an answer,” he says. “Whatever my viewers feel and how they respond, I am fully ready to accept.” □

- Myoung Ho Lee’s prints are available to buy from the Yossi Milo Gallery in New York. Prices start at $2,000 for a 12 x 10cm print. For more information visit yossimilo.com







Top In a selection of portraits for his second series, *Tree...*, Myoung Ho has exploited Mongolia's barren landscape to intensify the effect of framing his subjects. In this portrait, *Tree... #3,* 2012, he has cleverly avoided showing any crushed or flattened grass to mask all traces of human intervention. **Above left** The Siberian larch in *Tree... #6*, 2013 dominates the empty scape in which it sits; the white canvas against the grey sky makes the tree appear majestic in its isolation. **Above right** Ripples in the canvas behind the Korean cherry in *Tree... #4*, 2013 illustrate the complexity involved in setting up Myoung Ho's tree portraits.

Line of beauty

Gail and Jonathan Hughes-Morgan wanted a traditional English country garden with water at its heart. With designer Ian Smith of Acres Wild at the helm of its transformation they achieved so much more

WORDS **JODIE JONES** PHOTOGRAPHS **MARIANNE MAJERUS**

In brief

Name Millwater.

What Award-wining, large country garden with a variety of water features, including a mill race.

Where Surrey.

Size Seven acres of ornamental gardens in a 13-acre estate.

Soil Free-draining sand.

Climate Generally temperate but prone to flooding in the areas around the lake.

Hardiness rating USDA 8.

A wide turf path leads the eye along an avenue of pleached *Tilia x euchlora* towards a round pond with a stone fountain. Stripped of foliage, this lime avenue has a strong sculptural presence in winter.

It was the water that first attracted Gail and Jonathan Hughes-Morgan to their Surrey home, and on a winter morning the sound of it fills the frosty air with a rich, low rumble. “My husband has a thing about water, and this house was built alongside an old mill race diverted from the River Wey,” says Gail. “When we came here, the only other water feature was a silted-up lake, but I could see the potential.”

In fact, recognising potential is something Gail is very good at, and this is just the latest of a number of properties she has improved. “I never have a problem working out what to do with the buildings,” she says, “but I don’t have the eye to transform a garden.” Which is how she came to meet Ian Smith of design practice Acres Wild. “I was introduced to Ian two gardens ago, and he is a genius at spotting what needs to be done, then making you think it was all your own idea.”

It’s hard to believe, looking at the gardens today, but when Ian turned up in 2009 the site was a blank canvas. “There was very little here to work from. It was more of a field than a garden,” he says. “The first step was to find out what Gail and Jonathan wanted from their garden, then to set it into a meaningful structure. There was ▷

Main image

The stone fountain at the far end of the lime avenue is just one of several water features throughout the garden. It is left to run throughout the winter, unless a sustained period of freezing weather is forecast.

Bottom row left to right

On the terrace at the back of the house, a formal pool is framed by a narrow bed of thyme and cubes of clipped box, which contrast with a froth of frost-tipped ferns.

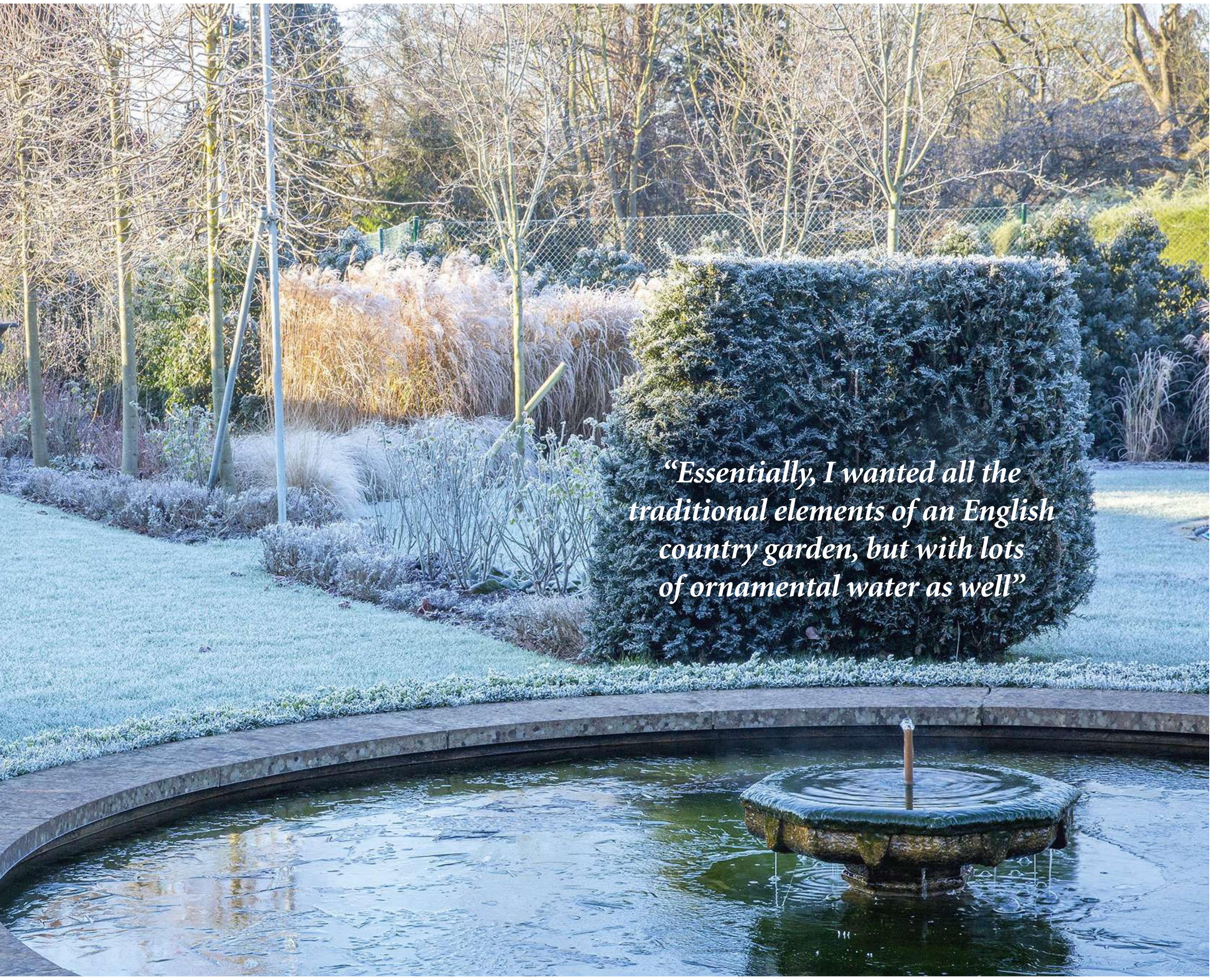
Sitting at some distance from the house, in a simple green space, is a rectangular reflecting pond, which is surrounded by a yew hedge and a pair of stone gateposts sourced online by Gail.

To one side of the house, where a tarmac drive once ran up the slope, Ian has wrought a dramatic transformation by creating a level terrace where brick steps lead past a stone fountain, through an arch in the barn and on to the lime avenue.

Caring for water in winter

Water is a valuable design element all year round, but in the pared-back winter garden it really comes into its own. Low slanting sunlight through clear, still air throws down beautiful reflections, and even on dull days the crystalline quality of the water’s surface can make for a mesmerising picture. There are a few practicalities to consider when preparing for the winter. The most important thing is to avoid a build-up of decaying vegetable matter in the water. Net the surface to keep out falling leaves in autumn if the pool is close to deciduous trees, and consider thinning out marginal planting, particularly in smaller ponds.

If the pool contains fish, take steps to prevent the surface freezing over. One simple solution is to float a small rubber ball on the water. Pumps should also be protected from freezing conditions. Switch them off when severe weather is forecast and, in extreme conditions, consider removing them and storing indoors until spring. Gail tends to have more trouble with floods than freezing conditions. In extreme rainfall, the water levels can rise alarmingly. On several occasions the handrail on the bridge over the mill race has been completely submerged.



> *"Essentially, I wanted all the traditional elements of an English country garden, but with lots of ornamental water as well"*

▷ already a tennis court, and a greenhouse marooned in an expanse of grass, to which the Hughes-Morgans wanted to add a swimming pool, water features and a walled kitchen garden. “I do think a kitchen garden is a wonderful gift to give to a house,” says Gail. “Essentially, I wanted all the traditional elements of an English country garden, but with lots of ornamental water as well.”

Even with 13 acres at his disposal, Ian had to spend quite some time thinking about how all these elements could fit together to create a cohesive whole. “The design process starts with thinking about how people will move through the space. You have to find the lines of desire, then work with them. It is a highly manipulative process, but if we get it right, you shouldn’t notice,” says Ian. It is a mark of how well he succeeded that when the Society of Garden Designers awarded this garden its prestigious Grand Award in 2014, the judges described it as a transformational project – a garden that feels as if it has existed for decades, leading you on a journey through spaces that feel ‘composed and perfectly linked’.

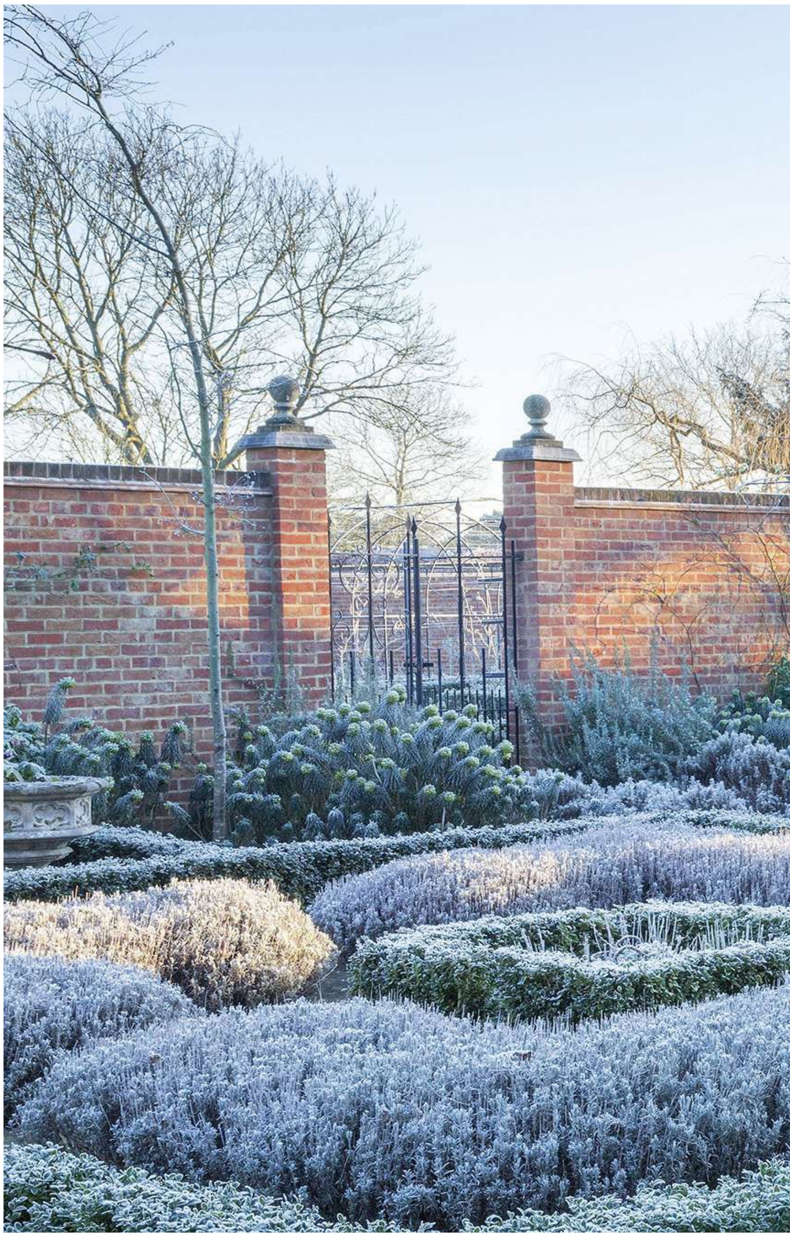
Starting from the house, Ian lined out the main vistas and routes of travel around the garden. “The lake lies some distance away, and is hidden from the house, so we had to tempt people to walk there,” he says. “We also needed to link up the few existing elements, including an old barn and some mature trees, and make sense of various slopes around the garden.”

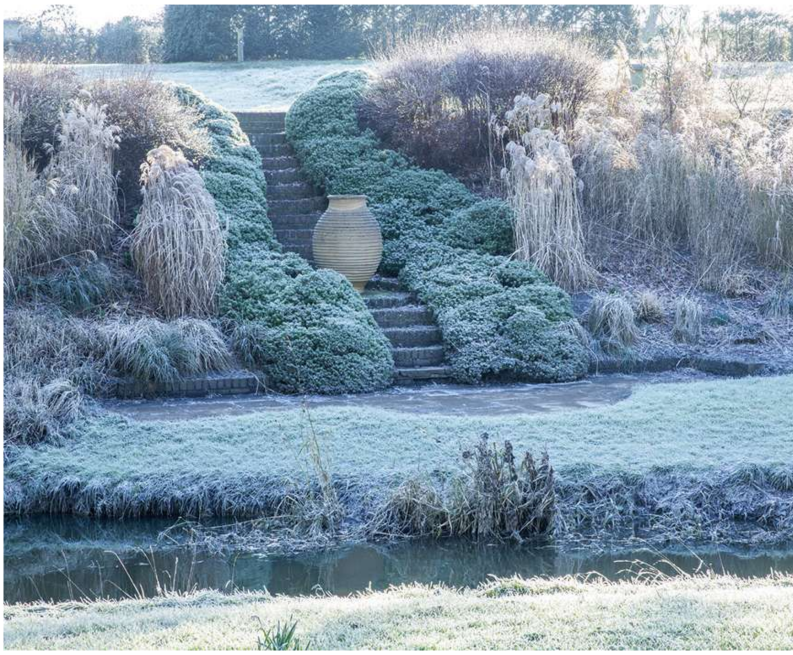
French doors from the house now lead out on to an elegant ornamental garden centred on a large, formal pond set into a stone terrace that is punctuated by cubes of box. In warmer months this functions as a relaxation and entertainment area, but at this time of year its strong structure and sheet of reflective water combine to form a dynamic picture when viewed from the house.

From here the design encourages visitors to walk out into the wider gardens along a series of paths laid in a patchwork of bonded gravel, stone slabs and ornamental creasing tile details. The combination of materials lends a pleasing air of Arts and Crafts solidity to the design, and sets up vistas and focal points to tempt the curious.

There is a small stone fountain set in a low square pool and, up a few steps and framed by an arch in the barn, an imposing avenue of pleached limes. At the far end of this avenue sits a large circular pond set in a low hedge of box, surrounded by a circle of lawn and framed by an outer hedge of yew. It is exceedingly simple but highly effective.

The walled kitchen garden has a dipping pool at its centre, adorned with a whimsical cherub fountain and, through the far gates, past a Modernist grid-planted ‘orchard’ of crab apples (*Malus* ‘Evereste’), ▷





Main image

In what was originally planned as a herb garden, a classic combination of box and lavender offers interest throughout the year. The main greenhouse, installed by the previous owner, faces the barn and backs on to the walled kitchen garden.

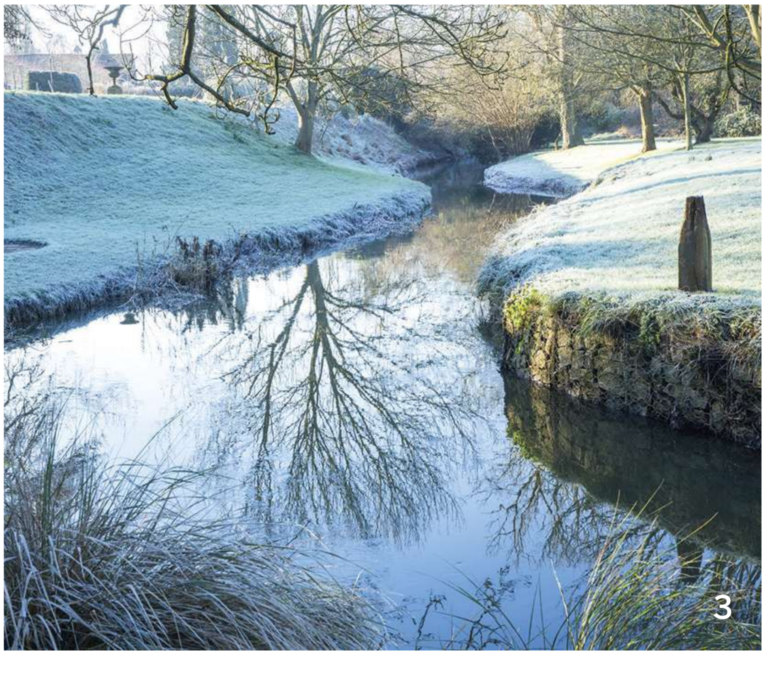
Bottom row left to right

At the farther reaches of the garden, *Hebe rakaiensis* lines a steep flight of steps that lead down to the mill race. The large Cretan pot is from Pots and Pithoi.

A modernist grid of *Malus* ‘Evereste’, which provides a cloud of white blossom in spring, links the kitchen garden to a circular lawn, edged with curved hedges of clipped yew. Seedheads of *Hydrangea arborescens* ‘Annabelle’, and stone urns add to the impression that this garden has been established for years.

On a still winter’s day the mill race is hauntingly beautiful. Gail often spots kingfishers zooming low over its water.

"The design process starts with thinking about how people will move through the space"



▷ you can glimpse a large, reflecting pond that is faintly Italianate in its simple juxtaposition of water, stone, grass and tightly clipped yew.

At the farther limit of the seven-acre ornamental gardens lies the only naturalistic water feature – a large and very lovely lake, originally excavated by previous owners in the 1980s, but dredged and enhanced by Ian, who planted the margins with reeds and gunnera, and designed a little wooden boat house and landing stage.

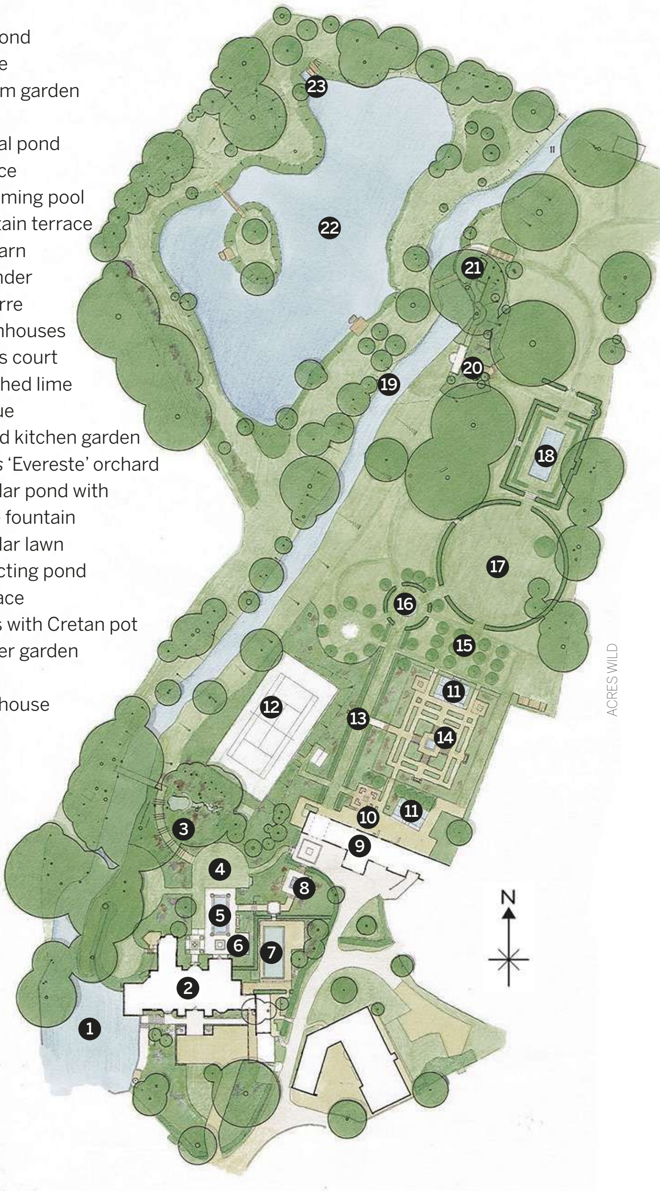
At this time of year, the lake is utterly beautiful. The surrounding trees are reflected in its glassy surface, and birds are drawn to the margins where frost-rimed seedheads stand in bold silhouette. “Before Ian created the garden I never bothered to walk down to the lake,” says Gail. “But now I go there every single day, and every day I see something new and beautiful.” □

USEFUL INFORMATION

• Ian Smith is one half, with Debbie Roberts, of design duo **Acres Wild Landscape and Garden Design** (Tel 01403 891084, acreswild.co.uk).

GARDEN PLAN

1 Mill pond
2 House
3 Stream garden
4 Lawn
5 Formal pond
6 Terrace
7 Swimming pool
8 Fountain terrace
9 Old barn
10 Lavender parterre
11 Greenhouses
12 Tennis court
13 Pleached lime avenue
14 Walled kitchen garden
15 *Malus* ‘Evereste’ orchard
16 Circular pond with stone fountain
17 Circular lawn
18 Reflecting pond
19 Mill race
20 Steps with Cretan pot
21 Shelter garden
22 Lake
23 Boat house



9 plants for winter interest

1 *Euphorbia* x *martini*
This handsome winter foliage plant is more compact than its popular relative, *E. characias* subsp. *wulfenii*, and therefore easier to accommodate in many gardens. The lime green bracts can appear in late winter and will last for many months. 75cm. USDA 6b-10b[†].

2 *Phlomis russeliana*
One of the most successful plants for winter silhouettes. *Phlomis* produces whorls of pale-yellow flowers over a very long season (from late spring to early autumn), then holds on to its seedheads throughout the winter. 90cm. AGM[*].

3 *Heuchera sanguinea* ‘Palace Purple’
A useful, dark-purple cultivar that makes an excellent ground cover and provides year-round colour in the garden. In winter it looks especially lovely when sprinkled with winter frost. 45cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

4 *Tilia* x *euchlora*
The so-called Caucasian lime, is resistant to aphids and so doesn’t drip honeydew like the commonly planted street limes (*Tilia* x *europaea*). It responds well to pleaching, and makes a strong contribution to the green architecture of the winter garden. 22m. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

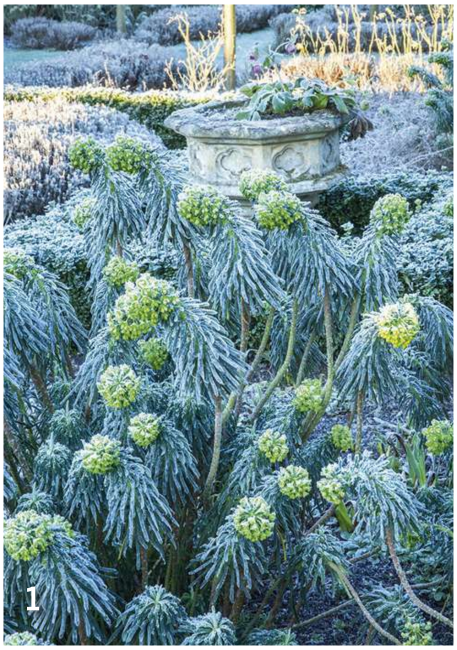
5 *Lavandula angustifolia* ‘Hidcote’
Lavender and box are a classic summer combination and will, if well maintained, create an attractively sculptural feature in winter. ‘Hidcote’ has struggled in many parts of Gail’s garden, so is being steadily replaced with ‘Munstead’. 60cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.

6 *Hebe rakaiensis*
This deservedly popular hebe will withstand a range of conditions and, although it produces an attractive show of white flowers in early summer, it is increasingly being planted as a low-maintenance, blight-resistant substitute for box. 1m. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 8a-10b.

7 *Teucrium* x *lucidrys*
This has been used in the kitchen garden to edge several beds. A dusting of frost emphasises the attractive shape of its evergreen aromatic leaves. 30cm. RHS H4.

8 *Hydrangea arborescens* ‘Annabelle’
Its enormous white flower heads make this a star of the summer garden, but it is also a winner in the winter. The desiccated seedheads will look good right through to spring, when you can neaten the plant with a light trim. 2.5m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.

9 *Miscanthus sinensis* ‘Ferner Osten’
Ornamental grasses of various forms and sizes can make a great contribution to the winter garden. At Millwater the displays rely on tried-and-trusted grasses, such as the tall *Miscanthus sinensis* ‘Ferner Osten’, which produces deep-purple flower panicles that age through pink to silver, and which is shown here growing alongside the shorter and aptly named fountain grass, *Pennisetum alopecuroides* ‘Hameln’. 2m. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.



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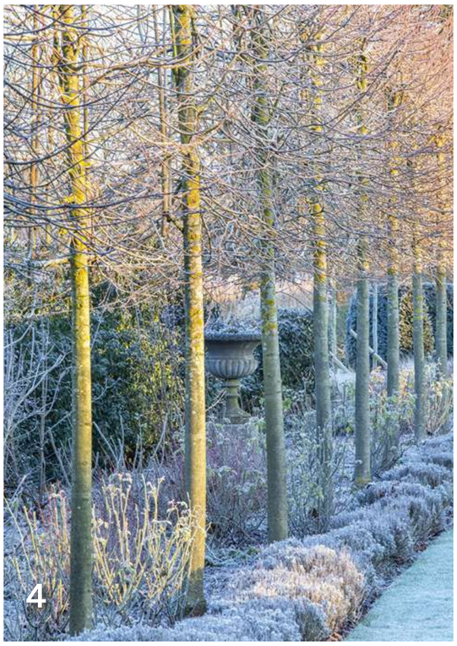

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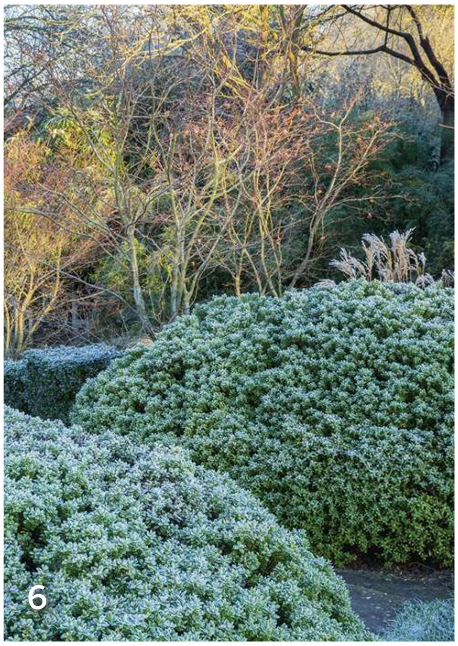

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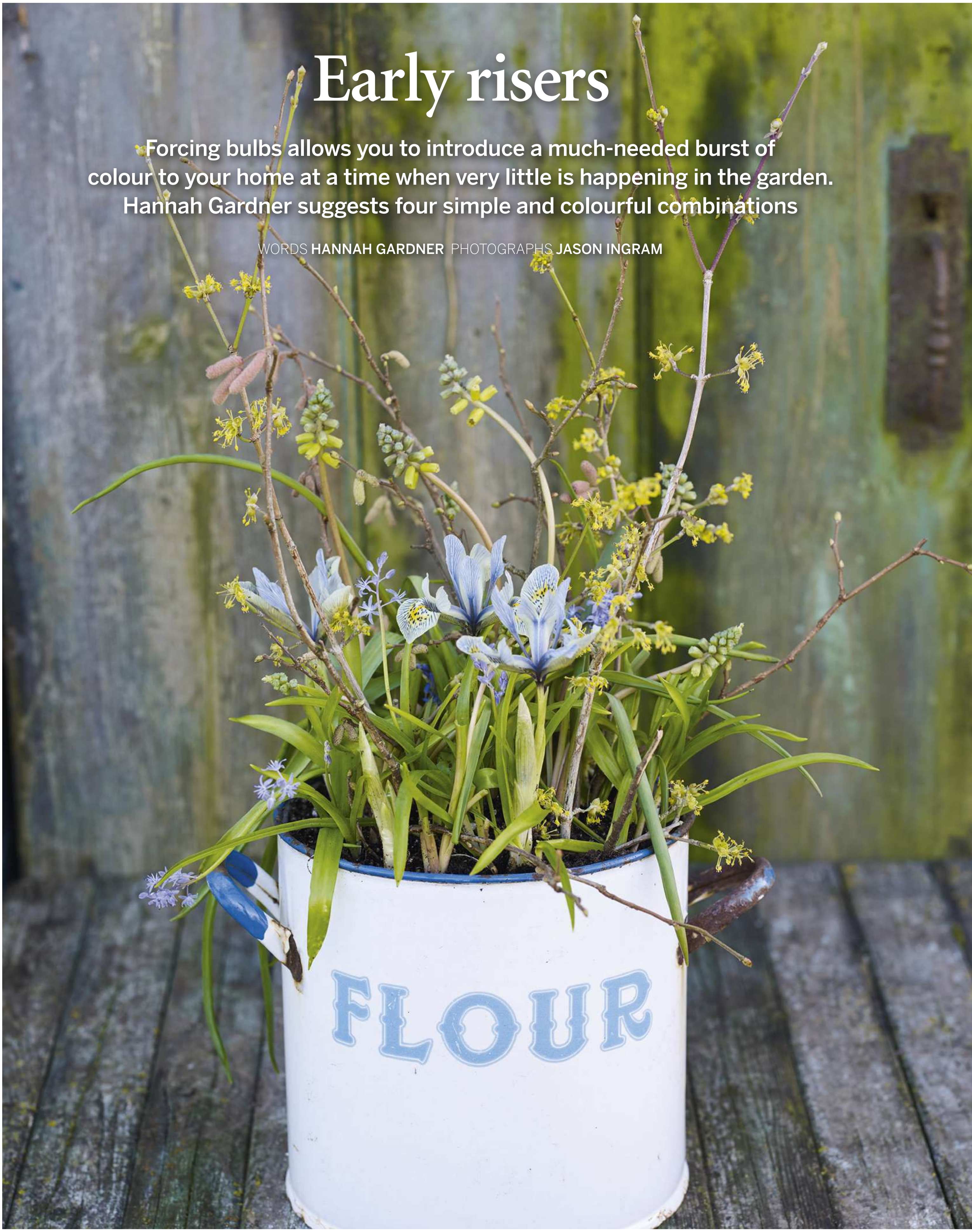
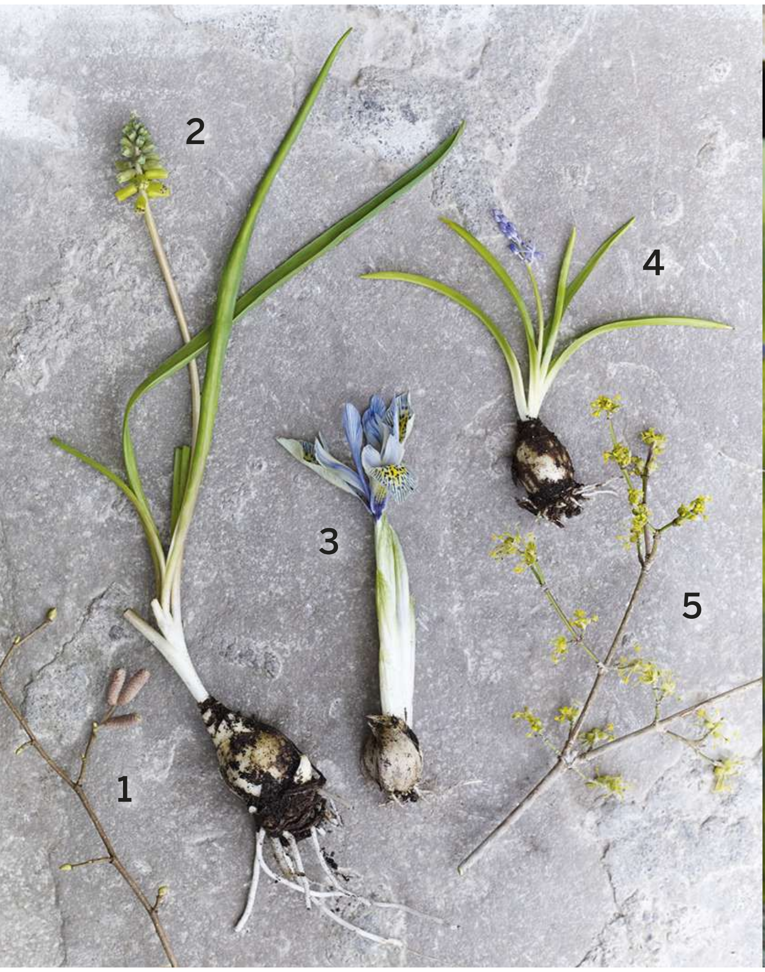
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.



Early risers

Forcing bulbs allows you to introduce a much-needed burst of colour to your home at a time when very little is happening in the garden. Hannah Gardner suggests four simple and colourful combinations

WORDS **HANNAH GARDNER** PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM**



Scented scillas

While *Narcissus* 'Paper White' and oriental hyacinths are traditional choices for 'forcing', you can prepare and grow a wide variety of garden bulbs indoors and create something unique. Here, I selected the muscari and scillas for their fragrance. In late winter they will fill a room with their sweet, musk perfume, conjuring a warm Mediterranean spring that is still months (and miles) away. The tight, yellow flowers of *Cornus mas* naturally occur in the same habitat as both the muscari and the iris, so it seemed a good choice for the twig supports.

How to achieve the look

Colours and shapes

As soon as the bulb catalogues arrive I leaf through them, make an initial list and then construct a simple mood board by cutting out the small images. Pay attention to details of height, but ignore flowering times as we are going to press fast forward. Here, my starting point was the baby blue on the enamel flour bin. Muted chartreuse and indigo tones keep everything pale and interesting.

Container, cultivation and care

I made drainage holes in the planter by banging a sturdy nail through the base. As it is quite deep I filled the bottom third with crocs. Good drainage is crucial for bulbs.

Using 3-6mm grit, put a thick layer in the bottom of the pot and then fill with a gritty loam-based compost. I positioned all the bulbs on the same layer with their crowns just below the surface. The planter should be fairly full, but the bulbs should not touch. Water once as you plant then leave somewhere dark, such as a covered cold frame or an unheated shed or garage, for about a month, checking regularly for signs of pest damage. Bulbs are vulnerable in small pots so protect from frost – a temperature of between 1.5-10°C is ideal. Once foliage begins to grow, move them somewhere cool before bringing into the warmth and resuming careful watering.

Plants (see above left)

1 *Corylus avellana*

The common hazel is generous. Starting the year with catkins and concluding with a crop of milky cobnuts. The cut branches are invaluable and widely available. 4-8m.

2 *Muscari macrocarpum* 'Golden Fragrance'

These choice bulbs are unusual and worth seeking out. The highly fragrant, greenish flowers turn a rich yellow with age. 18cm.

3 *Iris* 'Katharine Hodgkin' (Reticulata)

See page 77.

4 *Scilla messeniaca*

Lesser-known but more impressive than *Scilla siberica*. It has up to seven leaves and an abundance of flowers on each stem. 15cm.

5 *Cornus mas*

An unfussy shrub with luminous clusters of yellow flowers in late winter, followed by red fruits. 3-4m.

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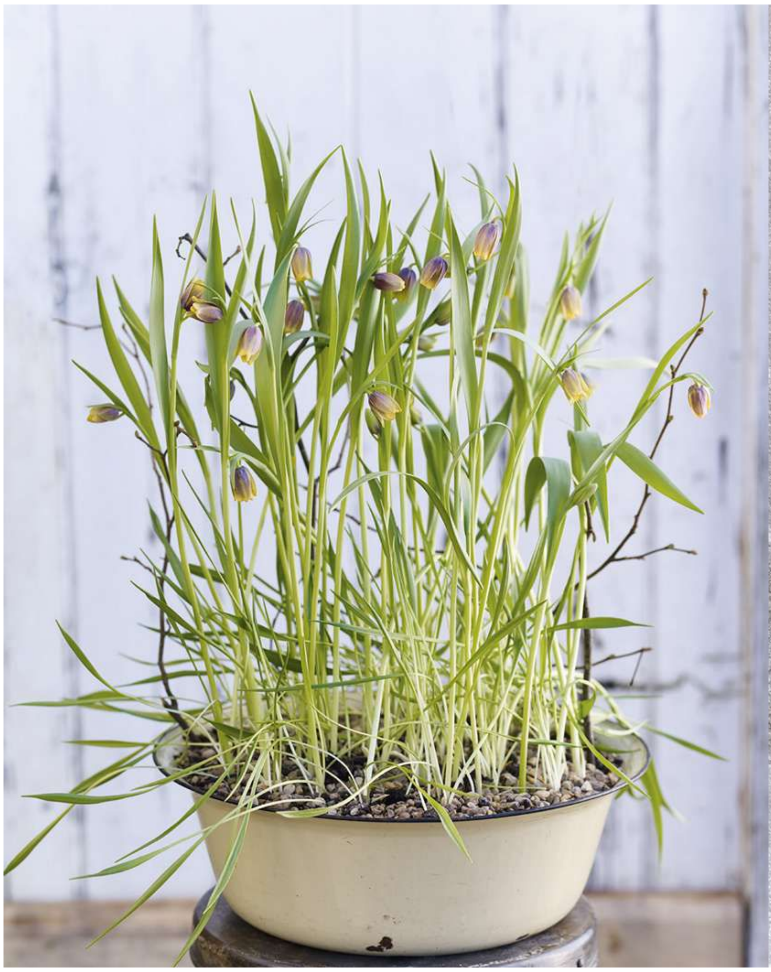
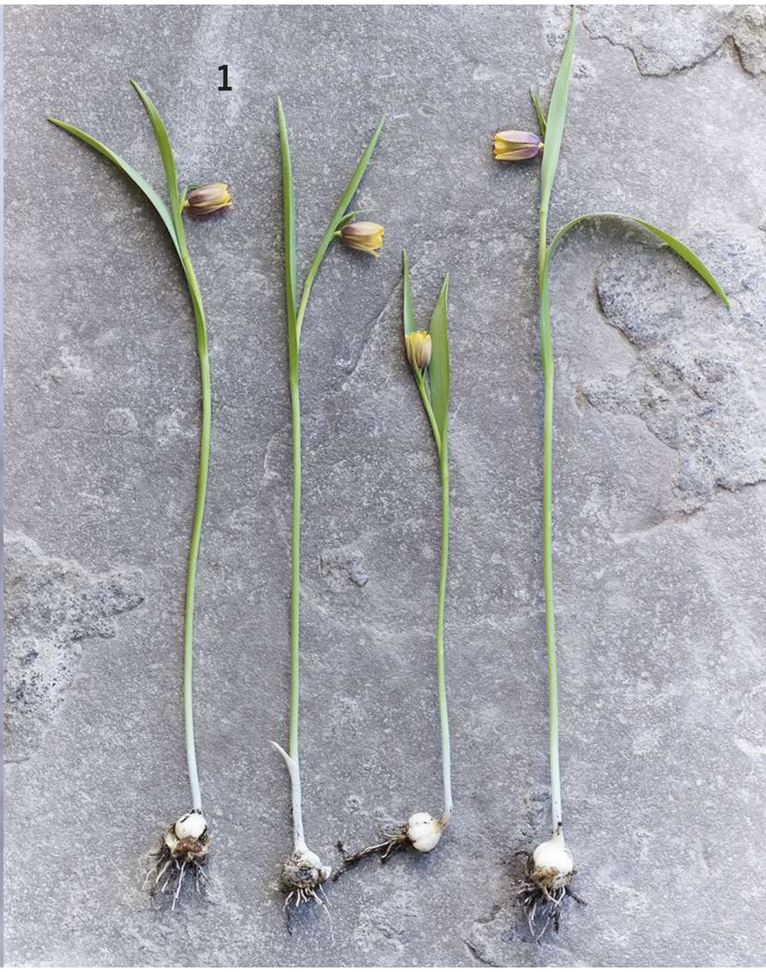
* Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.





Fantastic fox grapes

Fritillaries are my favourite genus of bulbs. Part of the lily family, they offer subtle colouring, and a shy, nodding fragility that belies their origins in the tough habitats of Eurasia and high elevations of California. Many species (there are 100-130 in the genus) are well suited to growing in pots but why wait until April to enjoy their charm? Forcing these and bringing them inside allows for detailed observation at a time when there is a brief pause in the gardener's year. Plant out in mid November and you should have a rich display by early March.

How to achieve the look

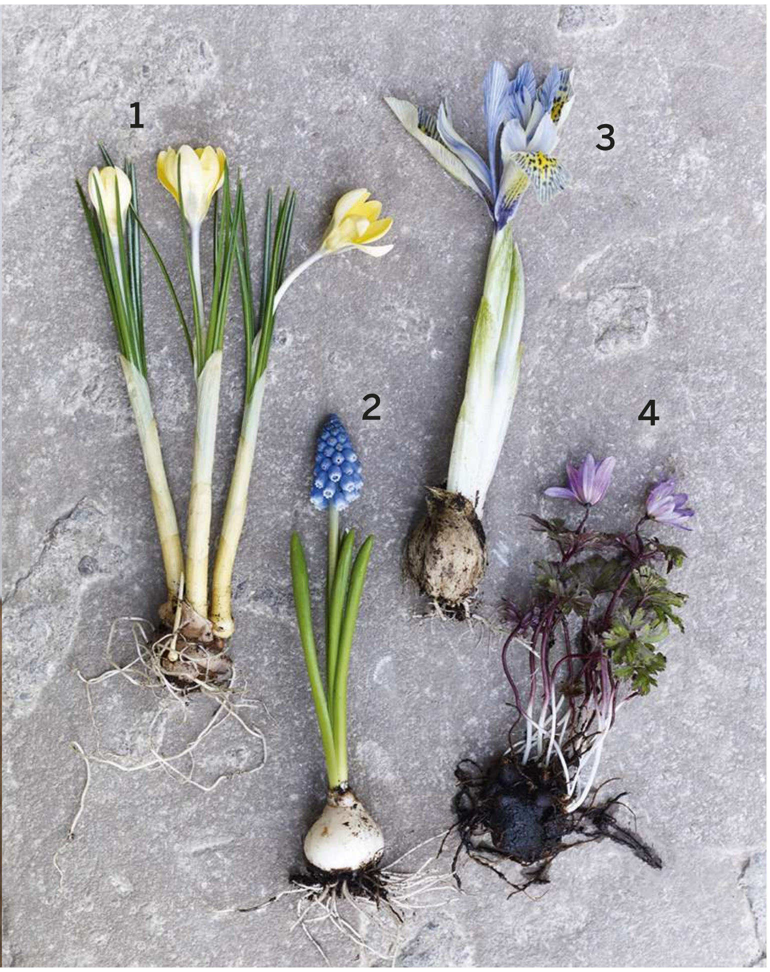
Colours and shape
Fritillaries in containers often work best grown on their own. I think they make enough impact to be displayed in such a simple way. This is also true of choice crocus and species tulips. Here, each slender, leafy stem bears just one bell-shaped flower, with petals of tarnished bronze and gold. The soft lime of the foliage contrasts well with these metallic tones. They will reach an eventual height of 30-40cm but as they grow will need to be turned regularly as plants grow towards the light. I often forage for twigs and branches to support and enhance a container display. For this display, I used some inconspicuous hazel twigs, complete with small catkins.

Container, cultivation and care
This is an old enamel kitchen bowl with holes drilled in the base. I love the clean lines and the antique cream colour. It in no way detracts from the gentle beauty of the fritillaries. The bulbs are about 3cm and are suited to a wide shallow container. The stems are willowy and appreciate a solid base of gritty soil mix to anchor them. Again, plant just below the surface and let the roots develop in cool, dark conditions before bringing them inside. A topping of grit improves the overall appearance and prevents compost splashing on to the leaves when watered. In a wet, maritime climate they prefer life in a pot, so are a rewarding and unusual subject to force.

Plants (see above)

1 *Fritillaria uva-vulpis*
More usually, although incorrectly, sourced under the name *Fritillaria assyriaca*, it is straightforward to grow and long lasting in flower. 30-40cm.

FORCING BULBS
Forcing bulbs, simply requires mimicking the cold, dark conditions of winter (ideally at a temperature of between 1.5ºC and 10ºC) for around ten weeks to give the roots time to develop, before bringing them indoors where the warmth (above 15ºC) and light will fool the bulbs that spring has arrived so that they sprout and bloom around four to six weeks early. The forced hyacinths that are sold commercially to flower in time for Christmas have been pre-chilled. You can do this yourself by keeping the bulbs for 12 weeks in the bottom of the fridge, but not all bulbs need this.



Something borrowed…

We all have favourite bits and pieces that can easily be up-cycled as temporary planting containers. Interesting cups, pots, bowls, tins and wooden boxes all make good planters as well as the more traditional terracotta pots. If there are no holes in the bottom it's not necessarily a problem. Be sure to add a good layer of grit and be even more attentive to watering. It's fun to buy something new if you have a specific colour scheme in mind, but mismatched pots can look good grouped together. Groupings work particularly well for table decorations.

How to achieve the look

Colours and shapes

For this display, I chose a decorative pot to emphasise the ornate veining of the iris and a simple rustic terracotta for the muscari and anemone. The smallest pot is of sentimental value and I couldn't resist growing a few scented grape hyacinths for my bedside table. The unusual pale yellow of the crocus combines well with the aqua and yellow flowers of the iris. Dwarf iris are richly patterned and like many of these small spring bulbs are better examined close up. A beautiful pale alternative would be *Iris* 'Natascha' (Reticulata). The little blue flowers of the hyacinth family (scillas, Roman hyacinths and muscari to name but a few) are all worthy subjects for growing indoors. One I haven't used here but worth seeking out is the tightly packed *Muscari azureum.*

Container cultivation and care

Start with clean pots and healthy bulbs. Fat and firm is favourable; anything small or soft is suspect. All of the bulbs mentioned are available to order from autumn. I initially planted all the bulbs in small pots, then replanted them in the pretty containers as they budded and then dressed them with grit. Remember to leave a little space at the top to enable easy watering. Once in flower, you can extend the flowering period by placing them in a cool location overnight.

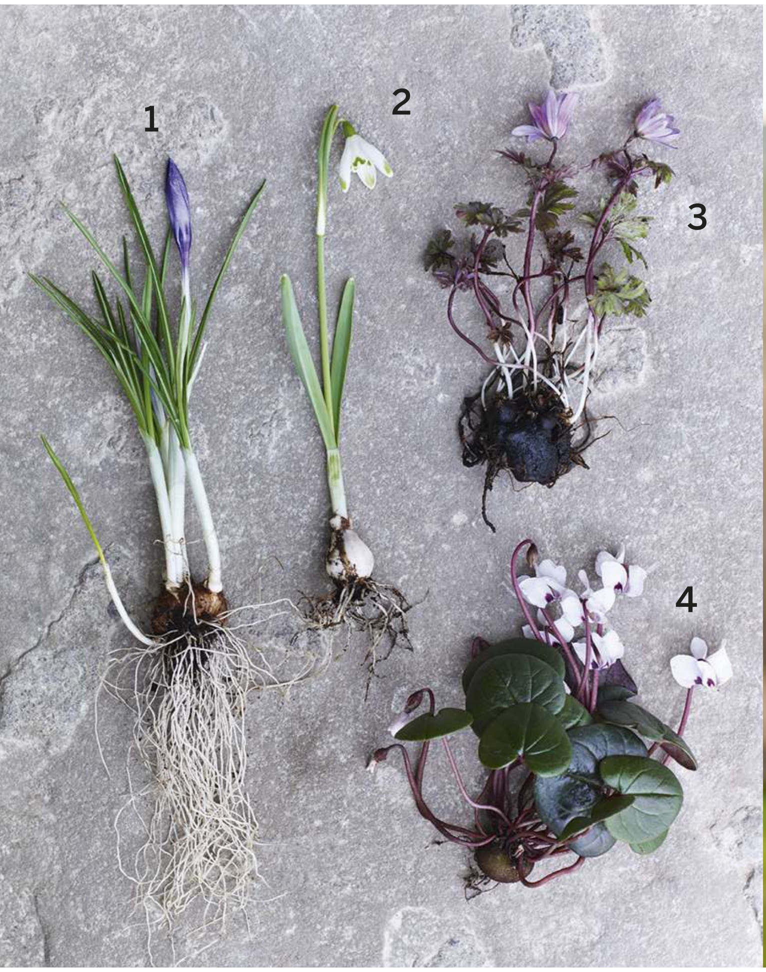
Plants (see above)

1 *Crocus* 'Romance'
Very free flowering, and an usual primrose yellow. Will establish easily if planted out. 7-10cm.

2 *Muscari aucheri*
One of the loveliest blues, and strongly scented. Works well in a pot indoors so that the scent can perfume a room. 12cm. AGM*.

3 *Iris* 'Katharine Hodgkin' (Reticulata)
My queen of the dwarf iris. Bred in the 1960s by enthusiast EB Anderson, this pale-blue iris is long lived and even after forcing it is worth planting outside amid snowdrops and cyclamen. The flowers are wide and opulent, with sea-green veining and soft, yellow-blue tones. 12cm. AGM.

4 *Anemone blanda* 'Charmer'
Pretty, pale-pink flowers with a light centre. The divided foliage has pinky tones on the underside of the leaf. 12-15cm.



The woodlanders

Woodlands offer the very earliest spring flowers as the plants have evolved to jump in and flower before the leaf canopy closes above them. Think of snowdrops, cyclamen and anemones that are often found mingling together on the forest floor in the eastern Mediterranean. These are all bulbs, corms or tubers that go into dormancy later in the summer. Displaying these plants in a home-made log planter leaves little room for misinterpretation. The texture of the bark (here it's silver birch) gives the plants an immediate context.

How to achieve the look

Colours and shapes

The shiny, round leaves of the cyclamen bring texture and reflective light to the planting. While the large, open flowers of the crocus add a dramatic shot of vivid, ruby purple. The upright linear foliage is a good contrast and adds height. I tucked moss in between as a finishing woodland touch.

Container cultivation and care

My resourceful friend Penny crafted the planter from the bark ring of an off-cut of timber. It has a sawn wooden disc glued into place as a solid base with drill holes added. It will last for years. I potted up a few of each bulb into little pots of the loam-based soil mix first and put them in the cold frame. The anemone corms need to be soaked overnight before planting. These bulbs do not need pre-chilling to flower but ten to 12 weeks in the cold is required to establish good roots. I put the look together once they started into growth. It is best to plant the crocus a few weeks later as they can easily skip ahead. Snowdrops are intricate and can be expensive so are often enjoyed more in pots. It is essential to protect against mice and squirrels. Upturned, aquatic mesh pots and mouse traps work well. Watering is crucial, roots must not dry out once the plant is in growth. They require consistent moisture but avoid wet conditions.

Plants (see above left)

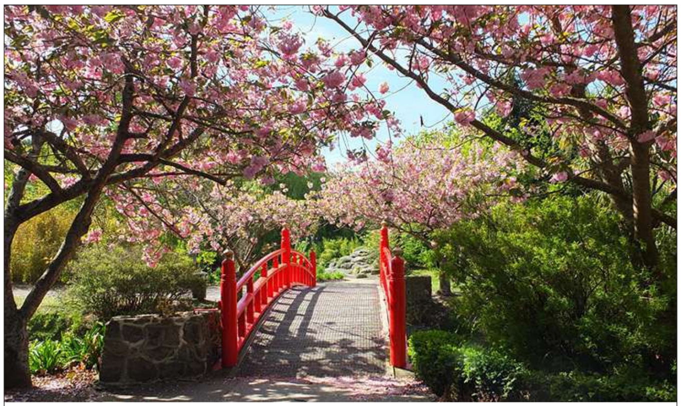
1 *Crocus* 'Ruby Giant'
With purple hues that are much richer than others in this group and wonderful contrasting golden anthers, this is a showy and fragrant early cultivar. 12cm.

2 *Galanthus nivalis* 'Viridapice'
Single drooping flowers with a distinctive green blotch at the tips. No need to 'force' as it flowers early, but bring into the warm to get them flowering. 15cm.

3 *Anemone blanda* 'Charmer'
See page 77.

4 *Cyclamen coum* f. *pallidum* 'Album'
Spring-flowering cyclamen, from the pine and beech woodland of southeastern Europe and the Middle East. Flowers range from dark magenta to the white form I have used here. 8-12cm.

For stockists see page 102.



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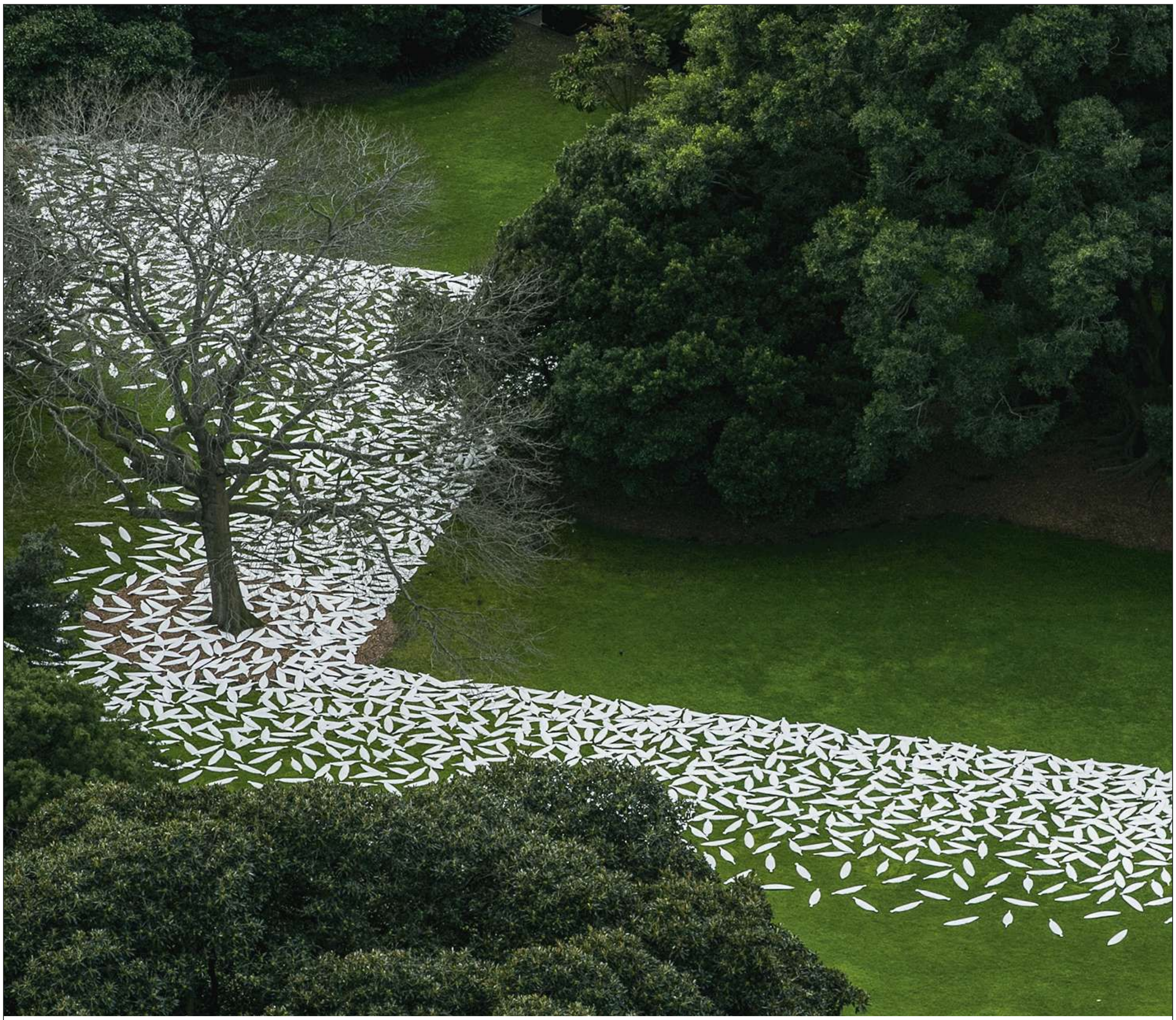

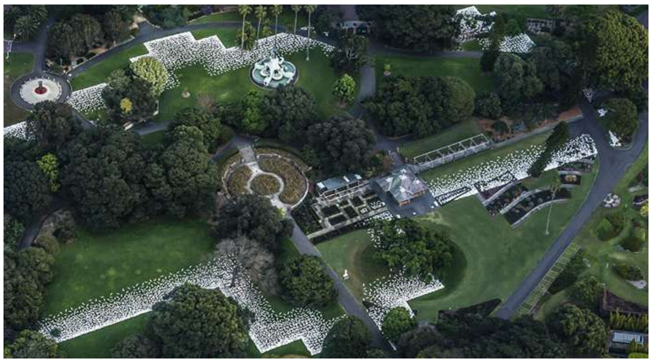

PETER GREIG

INSTALLATION

Out of the ashes

Barrangal dyara (skin and bones), a vast art installation made up of 15,000 shields by Jonathan Jones, was one of the highlights of the bicentenary celebrations for Sydney's Royal Botanic Garden this autumn. The plaster shields, of a style traditionally used in Aboriginal mourning ceremonies, traced the footprint of the former Garden Palace, which was burnt to the ground in 1882, destroying many Aboriginal artefacts, including skulls. The piece, which also included a garden of kangaroo grass, was chosen as the 32nd Kaldor Public Art Project. **kaldorartprojects.org.au**

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GARDEN PROPOSAL

Spiritual space

Dan Pearson Studio has been commissioned to landscape a tranquil wild garden around the planned new building for the Lambeth Palace Library. The building, designed by Wright & Wright architects, will not only house Europe's largest collection of religious books and papers after the Vatican, but will also screen the northern section of the Palace's historic gardens from pollution and traffic noise. The new landscape will feature a wetland habitat and wildflower-rich meadow glade, and will be separated from the rest of the garden by a band of woodland edge planting.

AWARD

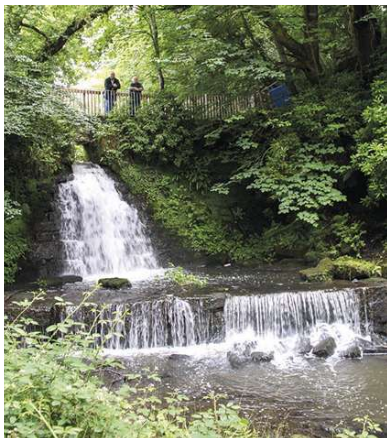
Step on up

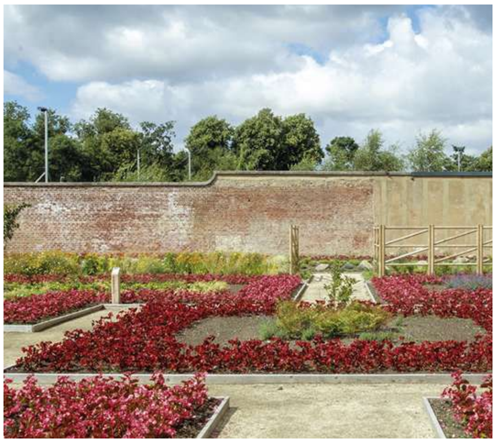
A bespoke 'hanging garden' creates an eye-catching roof for a RIBA award-winning, London home. Designed by Hayhurst and Co, the two-storey new build in Hackney has been dubbed the Garden House for its green roof with a difference. The low planting of predominantly alpine species is contained in elegant V-shaped steel trays lined with geotextile membrane and topped with granite chips. Stepping blocks enable the owners to garden their roof.

hayhurstand.co.uk

SITTING COMFORTABLY

This sleek new tree seat from Gaze Burvill will add a stylish touch to any garden. Made from steam-bent, European oak, the Reedback has a distinctive curved back that references the reeds and grasses that might be found growing naturally around a tree's base. Available in three sizes, and in sections, prices for a full seat start at £15,120 (internal diameter 70cm), and at £7,560 for a half seat. Tel 01420 588444, gazeburvill.com





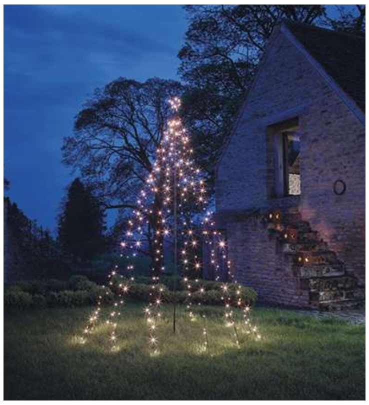
RESTORATION

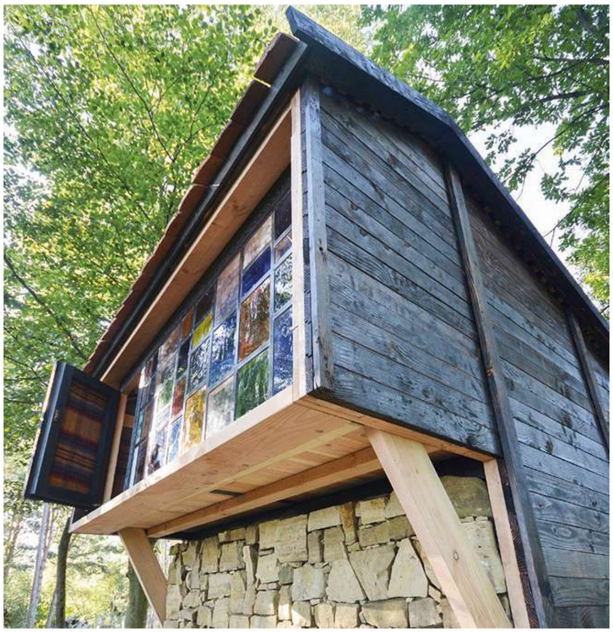
Uncovering the past

A feat of Victorian engineering that helped power Scotland's textile industry has been rediscovered thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund restoration of Rouken Glen Park in East Renfrewshire. Work on the Glen Walk path alongside the Auldhouse Burn revealed a hidden secondary waterfall, weir and dam walls built to harness the burn's power. The park's Walled Garden has also been restored and its symmetrical design won Land Engineering (Scotland) a Regeneration Award in the 2016 BALI National Landscape Awards. **baliawards.co.uk**

TWINKLE, TWINKLE

Create a stylish pool of light with this conical Christmas tree from Cox & Cox. Strung with 300 warm-white LED lights, and topped with a festive star, the Outdoor Light Up Tree Tower is 3m tall and lights up at the push of a button. Supplied with an 11m lead it costs £95. Tel 0330 333 2123, coxandcox.co.uk





INSTALLATION

Woodland bothy

Winter visitors to Standen House, a National Trust property in West Sussex, can catch a glimpse of an intriguing hand-crafted structure. *Bothy*, a temporary installation by artist Will Shannon, uses local materials and features a stained-glass window that Shannon has crafted in homage to the house's Arts and Crafts heritage.
Until 23 April 2017,
nationaltrust.org.uk

Notebook

- MyGardenSchool has launched a new eight-week, online garden design course taught by Hilary Thomas, former head of garden design at Capel Manor. **An Introduction to Garden Design**, covers the essential elements for planning a garden from scratch, and is ideal for those who want help to design their own garden. £480, learningwithexperts.com
- Two unpublished lectures by the late landscape architect and town planner **Geoffrey Jellicoe** – one on draughtsmanship and the other on the relationship of landscape architecture to architecture – can now be seen on the Landscape Architects Association's website. landscapearchitecture.org.uk
- Take a guided winter walk around **Yorkshire Sculpture Park**'s lakes and woodland and discover its historic features, such as the Shell Grotto, Lady Eglinton's Well and the Greek Temple, by candlelight. 10 December, 2-4pm. Book at ysp.co.uk/events
- Don't miss the new art exhibition ***Painting Paradise: The Art of the Garden***, which celebrates gardens in art from the 16th to the early 20th century. At the Queen's Gallery, Palace of Holyroodhouse, Edinburgh, until 27 February, 2017. royalcollection.org.uk
- Book now for Arne Maynard's two-day course on **Late Winter Planting**. Day one looks at how planting changes at Allt-y-bela, while day two will be spent exploring inspirational gardens. 8-9 March 2017. £475, arnemaynard.com
- Also book now for the one-day course **Making a Low Maintenance Garden** with Rosie Yeomans at West Dean College, Sussex, 11 March 2017. £111, westdean.org.uk

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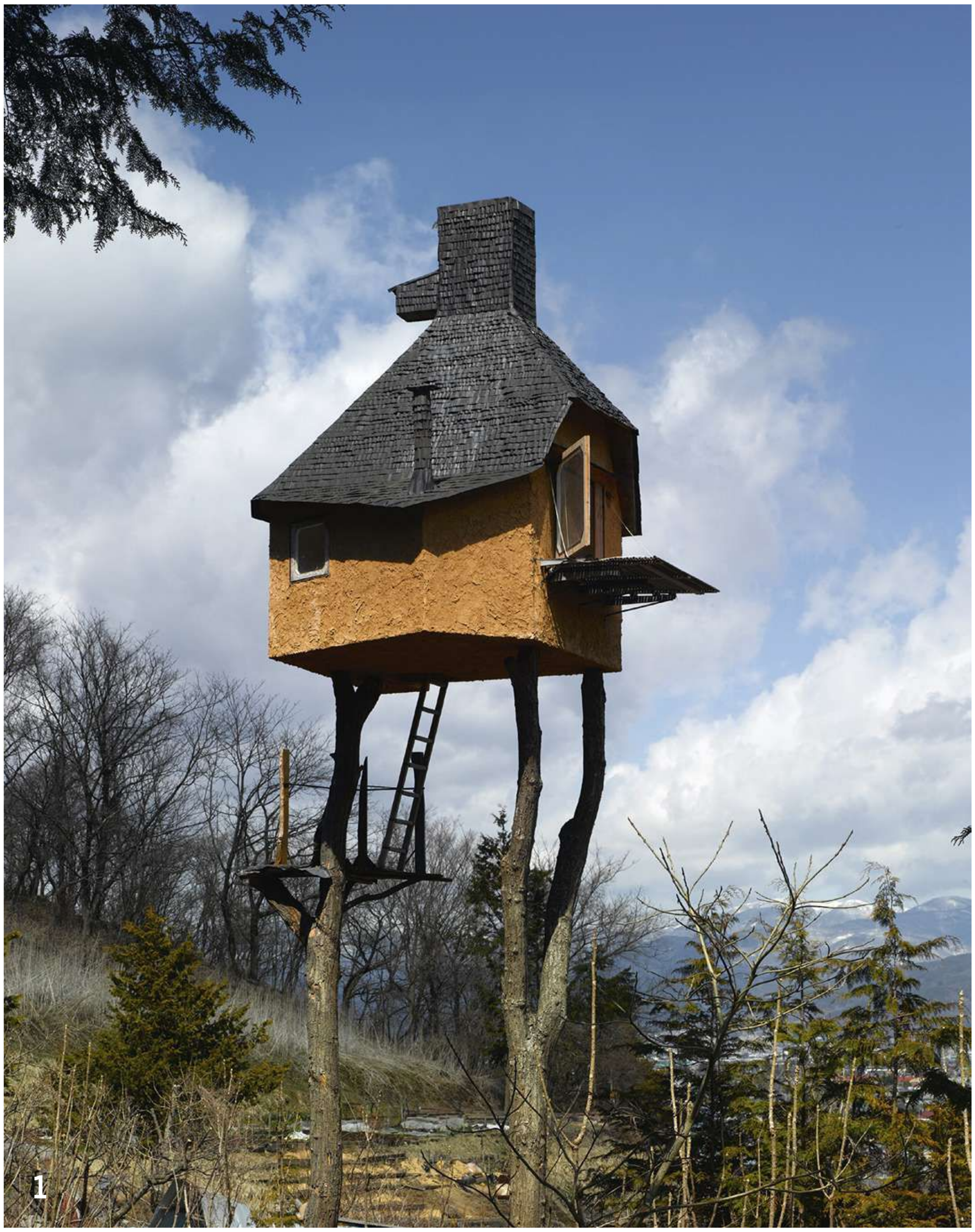
1 Tip top

Shoogly is a good Scots word, which perfectly describes *Takasugi-an* (meaning tea house built too high). Designed and built by Japanese architect Terunobu Fujimori on top of the trunks of two chestnut trees, as a retreat and a tea house, it is very simply kitted out with *tatami* mats and a perfectly placed window overlooking the Japanese city of Chino.

2 Plane and simple

This platform sits comfortably in the crook of a plane tree and is accessed by an elegantly sweeping staircase. Designed by Dominique Lafourcade in the gardens of Les Confines, near Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, France, it is high on my ever-changing list of Perfect Places to Sit with a Cup of Tea.



VIEW PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

James Alexander-Sinclair is a garden designer, writer, broadcaster and founder of into-gardens.com. He has served on the RHS Council for the past five years.

Hi-rise living

Why leave all the fun of tree houses to children? James Alexander-Sinclair has never lost the urge to sleep among the branches and finds some tempting designs

WORDS JAMES ALEXANDER-SINCLAIR

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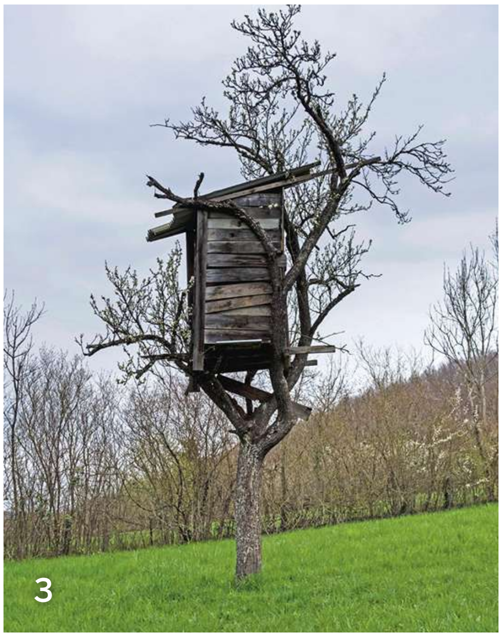
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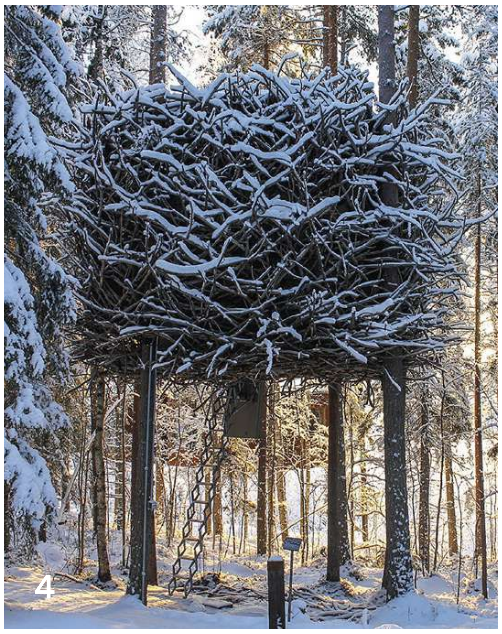
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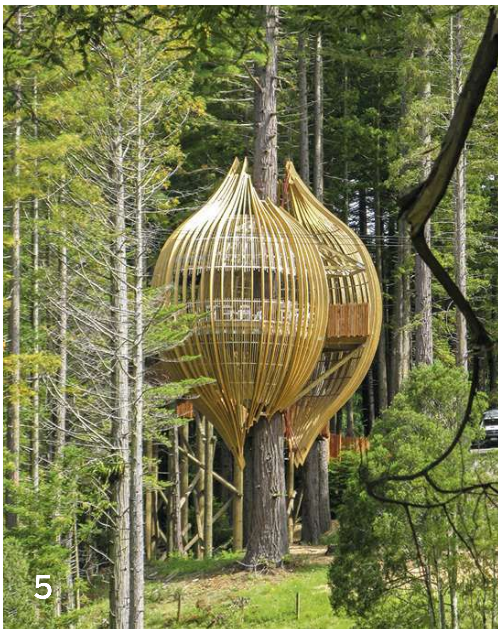
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2 CLIVE NICHOLS / GAP PHOTOS / DESIGNER: DOMINIQUE LAFOURCADE. 3 PZECHNER / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO. 4 BRITTASPENSIONAT.SE. 5 REDWOODSTREEHOUSE.CO.NZ / IDESIGNARCH.COM

3 Partridge pad

Perching precariously in a pear tree, this may lack the sophistication of many of the others on this page but it is, in some ways, more charming. I can imagine scrambling up there to escape for an hour with a book. Or to just sit there and watch the clouds scud past.

4 Nesting instinct

Behind the twiggy exterior is a hotel suite with two bedrooms, a bathroom and sitting room. All suspended from trees in the forests of northern Sweden – access is by ladder, which is then retracted to leave you in what is basically a bird's nest. It was designed by Bertil Harström in 2010.

5 Golden globe

The Redwoods Treehouse, built around a redwood tree near Warkworth, north of Auckland in New Zealand, can host a party of about 50 people (provided they remain standing most of the time), and is designed to look like a hanging chrysalis. The pod is 10m in height on a 40m-tall tree, and was built in a couple of months from sustainably grown pine and poplar.

What do the Swiss Family Robinson, Bart Simpson, Ewoks, Tarzan and the Korowai tribe of the Indonesian Province of Papua, have in common? They all live in tree houses – although, to my knowledge, the Korowai are the only ones with a tradition of cannibalism. Anybody who has grown up in a garden with a climbable tree will understand the attraction: the enhanced view, the oneness with nature and the marked thrill engendered by the ever-present possibility that you might fall out.

This feeling, for me at least, has continued into adulthood and I will take any opportunity given to climb a tree and sit in the canopy feeling the branches sway beneath me, listening to the leaves whisper in the wind. I would like nothing more than to sleep in a teetering nest of branches high up above the forest floor listening to the owls hoot at the gibbous moon. That, coming from a man who is worse than the princess and the pea when it comes to spending even a night in a tent is quite something, but such is the lure of the tree house.

The genus tree house divides into two distinct species: those that are built into the branches of trees and those that hover around the canopy but are actually supported by sturdy poles concreted into the ground. The former is, obviously, preferable as then you are at one with the tree – although you may have to endure the inconvenience of having a branch bisecting your living room. However, it also means that you have to adapt your architecture to suit the tree as it is generally frowned upon to start banging nails into the trunk or lopping bits off to secure your perch: for the health of the tree, try to use ropes and convenient forked branches instead.

The second option is not only more secure but also much more adaptable – you can put in as many levels as you wish and join the ▷

6 Hide in plain height

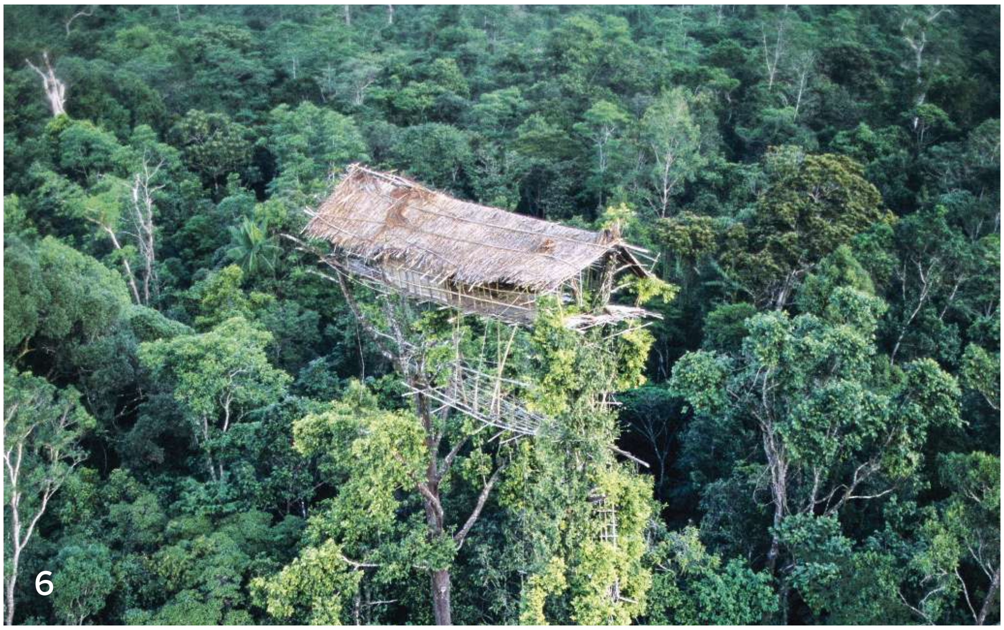
You know the tribe of Korowai, I mentioned in the main text, well this is an example of the sort of tree house in which the tribe have lived for centuries. High up in the forest canopy, they did not come to the notice of the wider world until the 1970s.

7 Lofty ideas

Like the Bird's Nest (see 4 on previous page), the Cabin is a snug hotel room overlooking the Lule River in Sweden. You access this one by a long bridge through the trees, which delivers you to a deck on the roof of the capsule. It seems to hang on the side of a pine tree with an amazing view across the forests of Lapland. Cosy but undoubtedly very romantic.

8 Multi story time

This is in Chongqing, China, and is built around a concrete 'tree'. Brightly coloured and quirky, it has become a bit of a tourist magnet, and you can see why. What child would not be enchanted? There are nine rooms in total with the topmost one being about 12m off the ground.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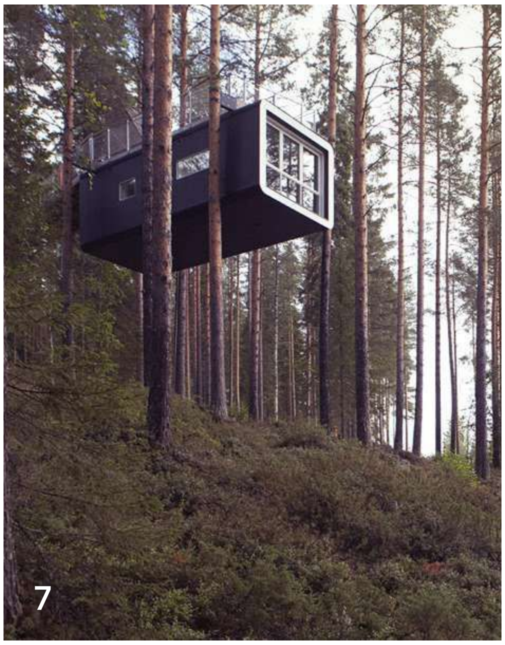
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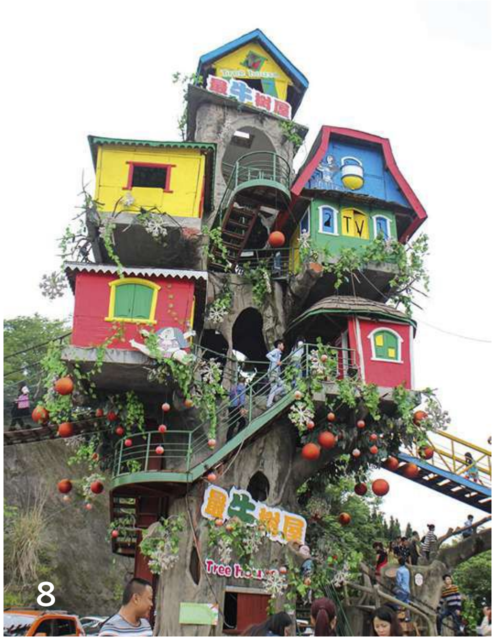
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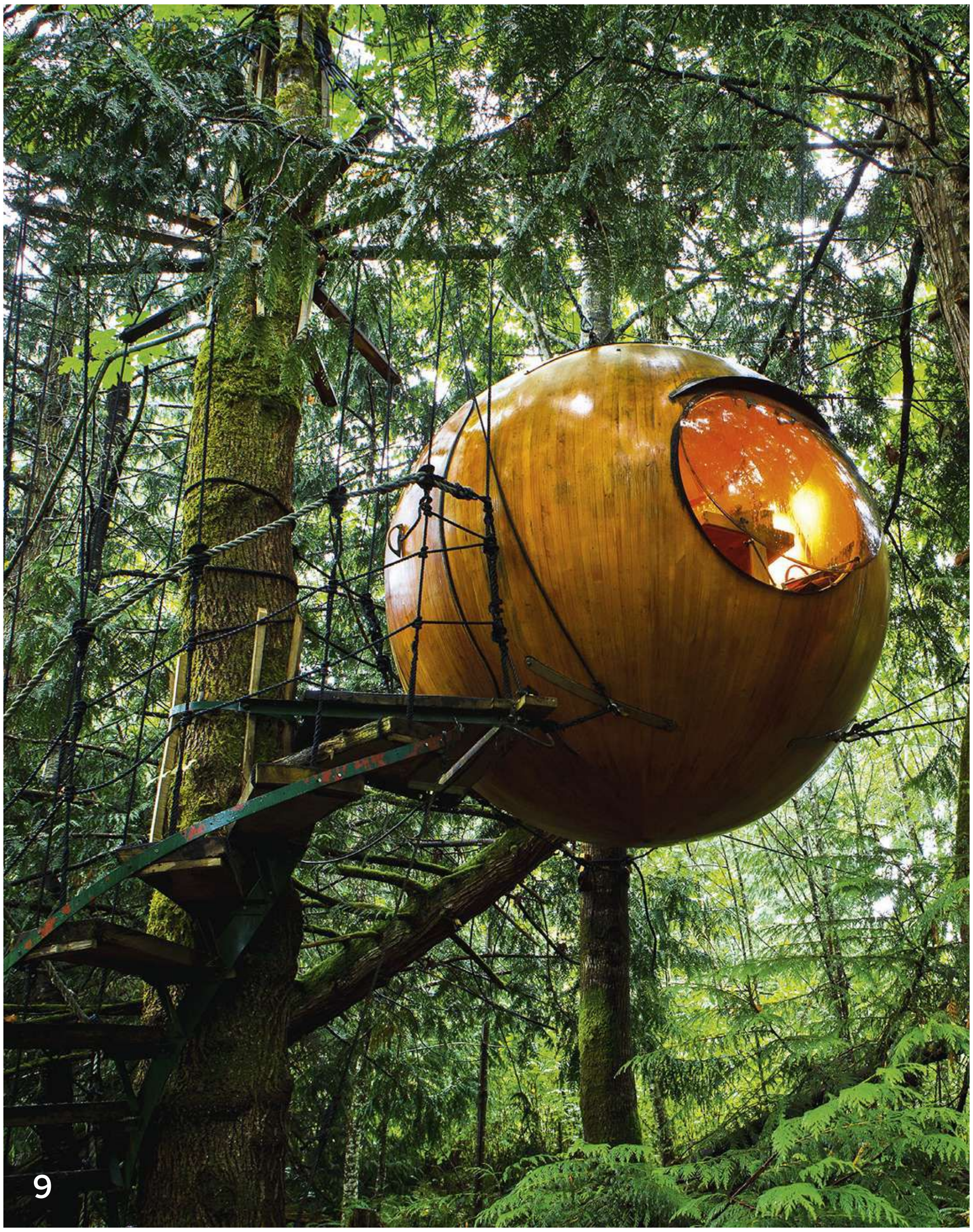
6 GEORGE STEINMETZ. 8 BARCROFT MEDIA/GETTY IMAGES.

▷ structure to other trees by way of rope bridges, trapdoors and all sorts of things. I made one in my last garden using some telegraph poles that I had lying around. It consisted of a high platform, which afforded a great view across the garden to the fields beyond, and was accessed, as is traditional, by an extremely rickety ladder that nobody much liked climbing. Below this platform was another layer for younger children with a jerry-built shed and its own escape hatch.

Which neatly brings us on to the subspecies of tree houses: those designed as play equipment for children and those intended for adults (there is a bit of overlap but we will conveniently ignore that for the moment). They obviously hold great attraction for children and tree climbing should always be encouraged. I have one very important word of advice when considering tree houses (or any other sort of play equipment): position it as close as possible to the house – children like to be watched while playing and are not happy if shunted off out of sight next to the compost heap. A children's treehouse can be very simple – as what is really needed is a place for the imagination to run wild. Many a great tree house has begun with a couple of builders' pallets from which a modest something can be erected in an afternoon and then become anything from a pirate ship to a fairytale castle. If DIY is not your thing then there are companies, such as Cheeky Monkey (cheekymonkeytreehouses.com), that can create tree houses to satisfy every fantasy.

Adults are rather more demanding but their tree climbing urges are well serviced by boutique hotels across the globe that offer lofty luxury – to include indoor plumbing and room service – to well-heeled travellers. This has sparked off some pretty exciting design from mirrored cubes to giant barrels suspended from the



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9 Eye in the sky

One of a series of three houses that form another tree house hotel, this time on Vancouver Island, Canada. They are suspended from the surrounding trees by a network of flexible and stretchy ropes so that, while snuggled up in your varnished wood and brass eyrie, you will sway with the winds and feel as if you are floating. Possibly not one for anyone susceptible to seasickness.

Further reading

Tree Houses: Fairy Castles in the Air by Philip Jodido and Patrick Hruby (Taschen GmbH, 2012).

Exceptional Treehouses by Alain Laurens, Ghislain Andre and Daniel Dufour (Harry N Abrams Inc, 2009).

Tree Houses You Can Actually Build (A Weekend Project Book) by David and Jean Stiles (Houghton Mifflin, 1998).

branches of trees from which you can watch the northern lights or deer grazing in glades. You cannot beat an experience that gives you the thrills of childhood combined with the soothing calm of the outdoors – especially if there is also a good Wi-Fi signal. It is probably going too far to say that every tree needs a tree house but there are some that are crying out to be climbed and colonised. If you have such a specimen in your garden then it would seem churlish not to give in to the temptation. □

READER EVENT

Don't miss James's talk on Sex, Death and Gardens at the *Gardens Illustrated* Festival, 25-26 March 2017. See page 8 or go to **gardensfestival.com** for details.

Useful information

You can book the **Bird's Nest** and the **Cabin** through **Treehotel** (treehotel.se) and the **Tree House Hotel** in Canada (above) through **Free Spirit Spheres** (freespiritspheres.com). Closer to home you can spend a night in the trees at **Treetops at the Fox and Hounds Hotel** in Devon (foxandhoundshotel.co.uk) or **Into the Woods** on the Isle of Wight (isleofwighttreehouse.com). The **Redwoods Treehouse** in New Zealand is available to hire for functions (redwoodstreehouse.co.nz).

There are planning implications for the more exuberant tree house builder. Broadly speaking, your treehouse should not be more than 4m high but, if worried, then it is sensible to ask your local authority before you get too carried away.

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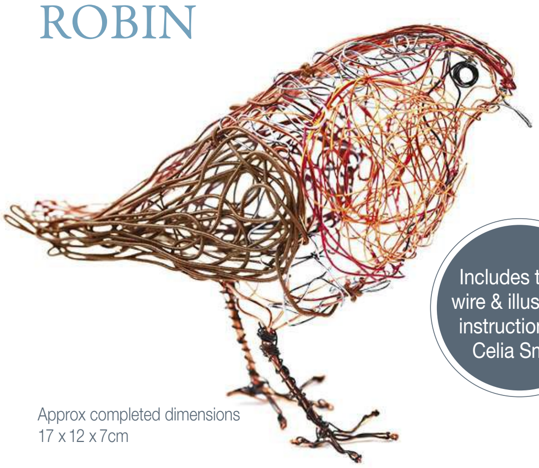

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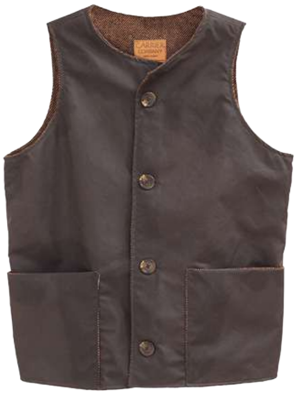

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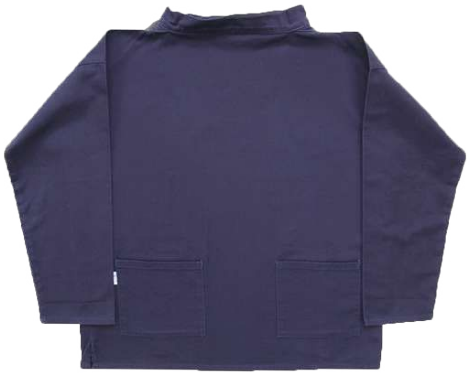
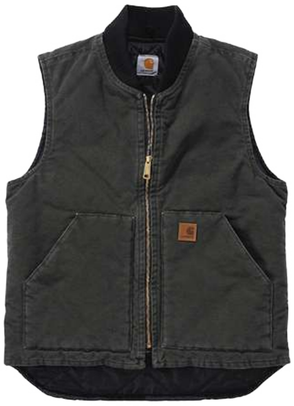
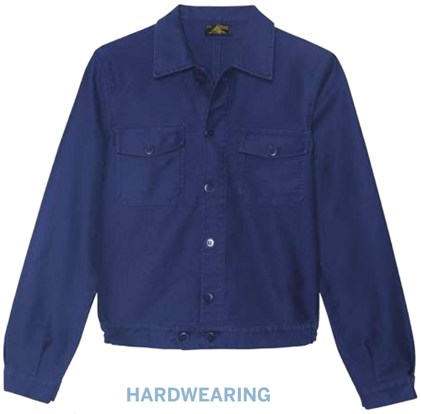


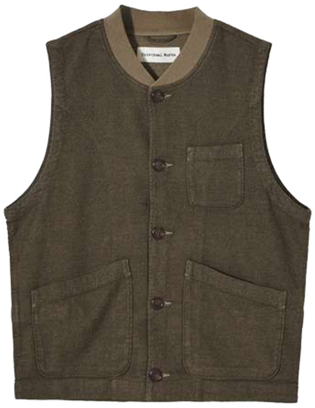
BRITISH CLASSIC
Fisherman's Smock,
£35, Labour and Wait,
020 7729 6253, labourandwait.co.uk



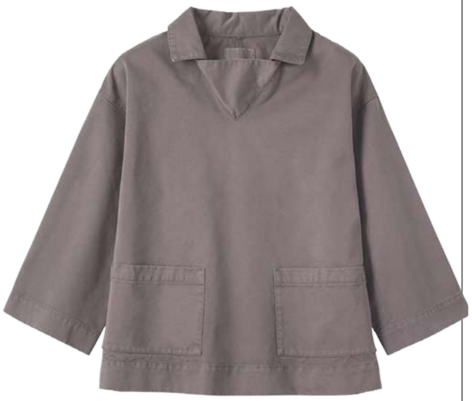
INSULATED
Arctic-Quilt Lined V02 Sandstone Vest in moss,
£60.95, Carhartt,
08454 656665, bestworkwear.co.uk



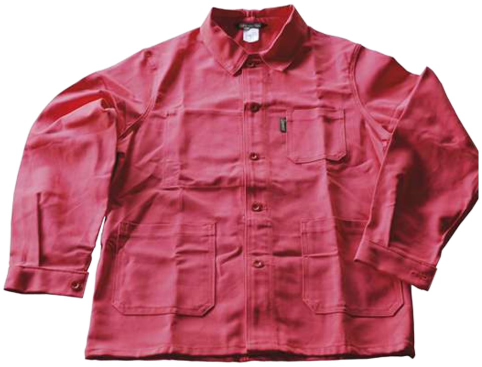
HARDWEARING
Genuine Work Bomber Jacket,
€245, Le Mont Saint Michel,
+33 (0)2 99 980213, lemontsaintmichel.fr



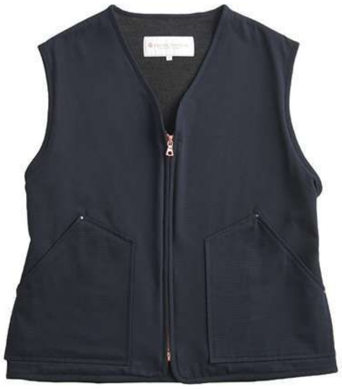
UNFUSSY
Chore Waistcoat in olive soft flannel,
£119, Universal Works,
0115 924 9363, universalworks.co.uk



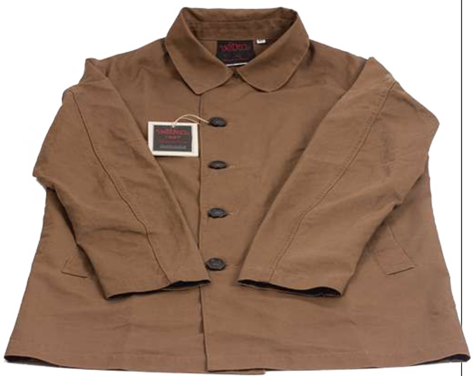
COLLAR WITH GUSSET
Cotton Twill Fisherman's Smock,
£95, Toast,
0333 400 5200, toa.st/uk



FUNCTIONAL
Le Labourer Work Shirt in red,
£54.99, Great Dixter Shop,
01797 254047, greatdixtershop.co.uk



LIGHTWEIGHT
Zip-up Jerkin in navy,
£250, Private White VC,
020 7629 9918, privatewhitevc.com



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Cotton Linen Short Mac in desert,
£145, Vetra,
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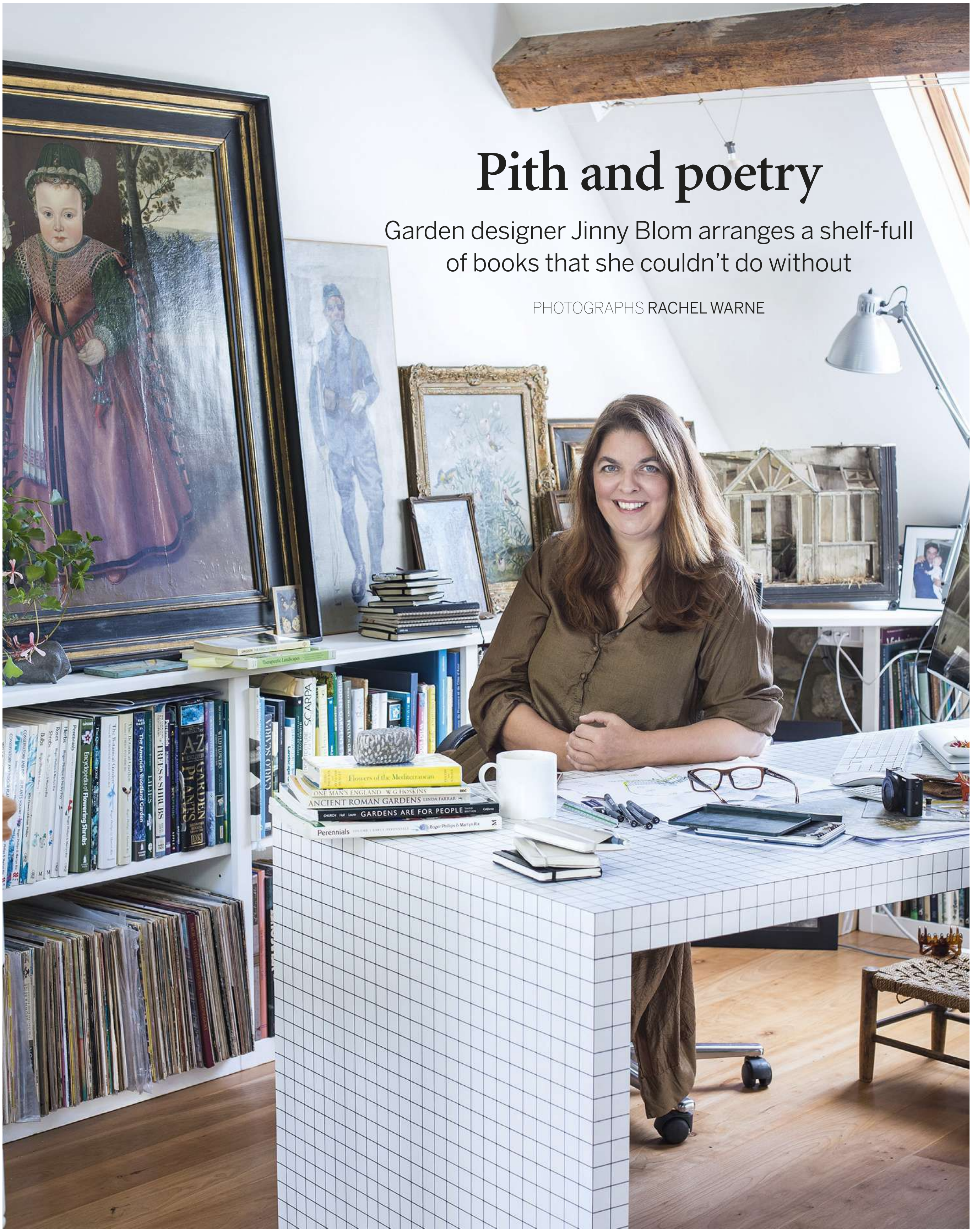
Pith and poetry

Garden designer Jinny Blom arranges a shelf-full of books that she couldn't do without

PHOTOGRAPHS RACHEL WARNE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I've always bought books and have been an avid reader since I first learned how. The pleasure of taking a journey through an author's unfolding words is a sublime experience. Reading, rather like drawing or making music, is a submersive experience and the absorption of information occurs on many levels simultaneously. Reading about finished gardens per se has never been high on my list of priorities, yet at a glance I have roughly 60 linear metres of garden-related books in the library. I clearly enjoy the subject. With gardening I want the pith, not the fruit. I need the facts, the soul, and the experience of the subject matter. If I could read about garden matters in bullet points, I'd be happy! Judging by my book choices, I seem to favour concise, encyclopaedic authors who deliver aphoristic shots of knowledge.

The culture associated with gardening and landscaping is profoundly interesting. Botany, for example, is an absorbing science so it is mystifying that there are not more degrees in British universities on the subject. Horticulture spans the science and technology of plant husbandry, the business of plant production and sales, and the art of growing plants and landscaping. It's a hugely broad subject and the natural sister to agriculture, yet applied in many diverse ways. I am mystified as to why it has fallen from view and is considered the 'poor relation' of other academic subjects, especially as our lives depend on it. Gardening is rooted in the geological symphony of the landscape, weaving together the complexities of the land we stand on and draw our materials from. Gardening is weather, the uplifting poetry of ever-changing light and the mercurial seasonal variances that make our gardens glow. Gardening touches social science and social history. Gardening consumes the hands, hearts and minds of poets, artists, scientists, businessmen, academics, naturalists and craftsmen. That's why I love it and here is how my book choices express that love.

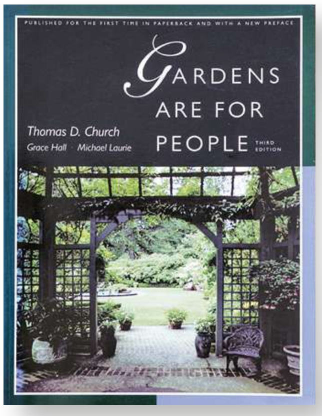
Jinny's desert island books

ONE MAN'S ENGLAND
BBC
W.G. HOSKINS

One Man's England

by WG Hoskins (BBC, 1978)

Mr WG Hoskins consolidated my feelings for England in the 1970s with his highly instructive two-part documentary series *Landscapes of England* for the BBC. It was based on 12 essays that expressed his intense love and knowledge of different parts of the country. As he says, 'the English landscape as a whole has about a hundred landscapes inside it, like the minor themes in a great symphony', and uncovering their complex historical evolution with Mr H is a repeatable pleasure. The language is succinctly informative and effortlessly poetic – he is the poet laureate of England's estate, as far as I'm concerned.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GARDENS ARE FOR PEOPLE
THIRD EDITION
Thomas D. Church
Grace Hall Michael Laurie

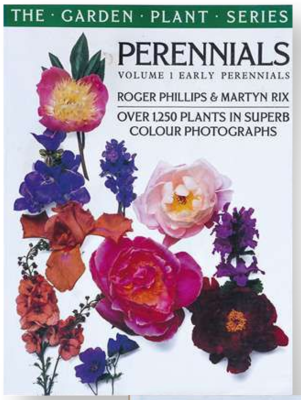
Gardens are for People

by Thomas D Church (University of California Press, 1955)

It's probably sacrilege to say it, but I biffed Russell Page in favour of this slender volume by the American landscape architect Thomas Church. He understood

> *The root of good thinking is sitting still. Church sat at the same drawing table from the 1930s to the 1970s*

the psychology of what everyone wants from their home and what we all aspire to gain from our collective surroundings, and expressed it with clear and direct language. He made design accessible. His intelligence is palpable and allows the reader the freedom to interpret from a sound educational perspective. I admire him for sitting at the same drawing table from the 1930s to the late 1970s. That is the root of good thinking: sitting still.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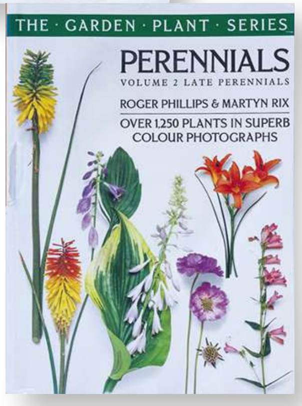
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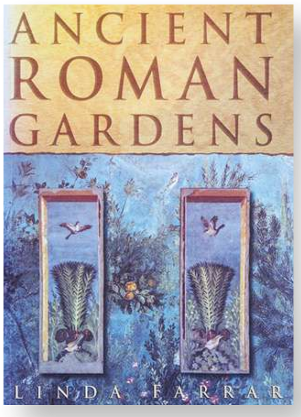
PERENNIALS
VOLUME 2 LATE PERENNIALS
ROGER PHILLIPS & MARTYN RIX
OVER 1,250 PLANTS IN SUPERB COLOUR PHOTOGRAPHS

Perennials: Volume 1 Early Perennials, Volume 2 Late Perennials

by Roger Phillips and Martyn Rix (Macmillan, 1994)

These were the books I saved when my house flooded a few years back. I sprinted, howling, through the ascending water and hauled them to safety. Once sodden and now crispy, I can't throw them away as they've been my constant companions since they were first published. The books are laid out in the most intelligent fashion, both logical and inspiring. I always want to see plants contextualised to their place of origin and these books do that using field photography. The succinct captions are all you need to progress to using the plants. I have the whole series and they could almost be my ten desert island books.

Flowers of the Mediterranean
ONE MAN'S ENGLAND W.G. HOSKINS
ANCIENT ROMAN GARDENS LINDA FARRAR
GARDENS ARE FOR PEOPLE
Perennials VOLUME 1 EARLY PERENNIALS
Roger Phillips & Martyn Rix


ANCIENT ROMAN GARDENS
LINDA FARRAR

Ancient Roman Gardens

by Linda Farrar (Sutton, 1998)

Well, the Romans taught us almost everything! This book certainly makes you feel a bit foolish when you discover that the faint glimmer of a 'new' idea was detailed to the nth degree around 36BC. Linda Farrar, a classicist and archeologist with an interest in garden history, is a superb writer. She delivers up pleasingly detailed accounts, such as the use of pitch pine as easy and reliable topiary. She also describes the structure and purpose of the gardens as well as their social mores. One can almost smell and feel Roman life, from humble veg plot to palatial home, through the pages.

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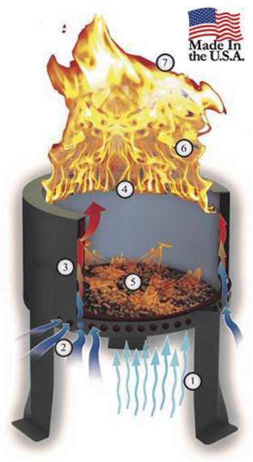

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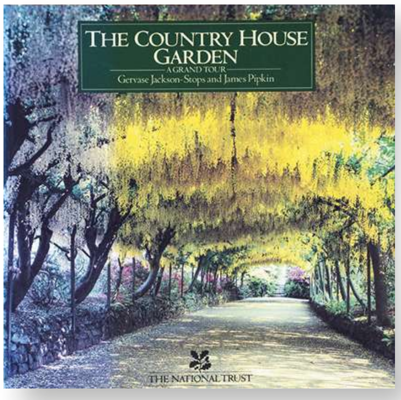
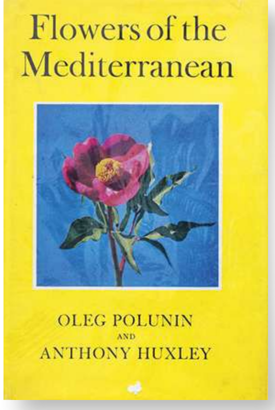


The Country House Garden: A Grand Tour

by Gervase Jackson-Stops (Pavilion, 1987)

Gervase was an old friend and a brilliant person to go touring with. Like Lewis Carroll's Red Queen, he was constantly on the move and breathless with curiosity. He would rattle out information in charming, rapid-fire fashion, and I could never keep up. His writing, thankfully, allows one to absorb his knowledge at leisure. This relatively simple book contains a plethora of information about the English country house garden tradition and breaks it down into practical chapters. I often refer to it if I need to confirm a detail or locate a route into further research. Did you know that the difference between and allée and an avenue was one of scale and use? Handy isn't it?



Flowers of the Mediterranean

by Oleg Polunin and Anthony Huxley (Chatto and Windus, 1972)

I found this recently when I was looking for a decent scholarly book about the horticulture of the Mediterranean. It covers the region accurately rather than interpreting it as the popular contemporary holiday destination of less diligent writers. It's a tremendous book and does what I love: it includes historic references, local information, plant details and cultural anecdotes, all in engaging language. It has the benefit of being small so I can take it on my trips to Jordan, North Africa or France and find all manner of useful things in it. It has been my constant companion on a recent project. Although out of print, it's well worth tracking down.

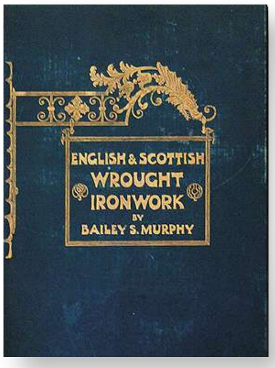
What gardener isn't obsessed by the weather? I'm transfixed by the drama of the UK climate

THE ENGLISH YEAR
Compiled by Geoffrey Grigson

The English Year

Compiled from diaries and letters by Geoffrey Grigson (Oxford University Press, 1984)

What gardener isn't obsessed by the weather? I'm transfixed by the drama of the UK climate and missed it sorely when I lived abroad. This is the most ingenious little book. Geoffrey Grigson, poet, essayist and polymath, collated a full calendar year of weather remarks as recorded by some of our greatest writers and poets. I give you, at random, the following entry by Gilbert White, 1770 (Hampshire), 6 July: '*Phallus impudicus olet* [the Stinkhorn smells]. Young daws come forth. Cut my sainfoin: a vast crop. Vast showers about.' I refer to this book every time we get 'freak' weather and more often than not find similarly anomalous events recorded. Edifying and calming by turn. It is also a sad reference to the extinction of our once great English language, LOL!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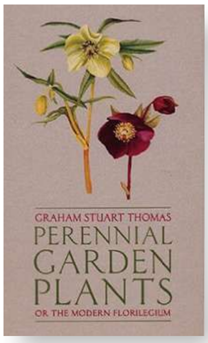
IRONWORK
BY
BAILEY S. MURPHY

English & Scottish Wrought Ironwork

by Bailey Scott Murphy, architect. Photo-lithographed and printed by George Waterston & Sons, Edinburgh (1904)

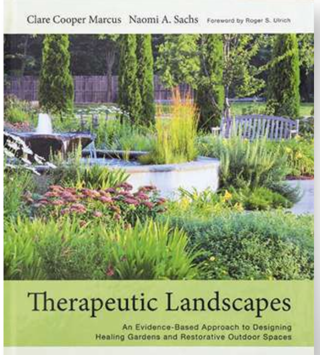
This book is a constant companion and we use it in the office as a hands-on guide to creating exemplary ironwork. We work closely with restoration craftsmen so it's very useful to be able to describe in detail the end result. It is a huge book, with many details lovingly hand drawn at 1:1 scale and all described with crystalline clarity. Sometimes I open it just to smell proper paper and ink.


GRAHAM STUART THOMAS
PERENNIAL
GARDEN
PLANTS
OR THE MODERN FLORILEGIUM

Perennial Garden Plants or The Modern Florilegium

by Graham Stuart Thomas (JM Dent, 1976)

A wonderful book describing the best and most-used perennial garden plants. While there are virtually no pictures, the brilliant peremptory text makes you sit up and pay attention. Each entry starts with the plant's country of origin (hurrah) and then deftly describes its key needs and attributes. Stuart Thomas became a gardener at the age of eight, and knowledge pours from him.


Clare Cooper Marcus Naomi A. Sachs Foreword by Roger S. Ulrich
Therapeutic Landscapes
An Evidence-Based Approach to Designing Healing Gardens and Restorative Outdoor Spaces

Therapeutic Landscapes

by Clare Cooper Marcus and Naomi A Sachs (Wiley, 2015)

This book is worthy of inclusion in the curriculum of any landscape course and should have a place on the shelf of anyone interested in the relationship between landscape and health. The Therapeutic Landscapes Network, set up and run by Naomi Sachs in the USA, is a vital academic resource both for designers and those seeking to improve public facilities. This book, filled with essential information garnered from myriad sources, states that therapeutic design is participatory, as it should be.

> *Stuart Thomas became a gardener at the age of eight, and knowledge pours from him*

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Don't miss Jinny's talk at the *Gardens Illustrated* Festival, 25-26 March 2017. See page 8 or go to **gardensfestival.com**

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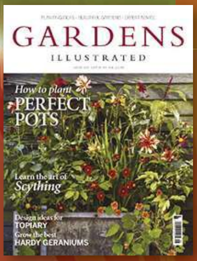

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Christmas gifts feature (pages 17-22)

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Forcing bulbs feature (pages 74-79)

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CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD COMPETITION, P103

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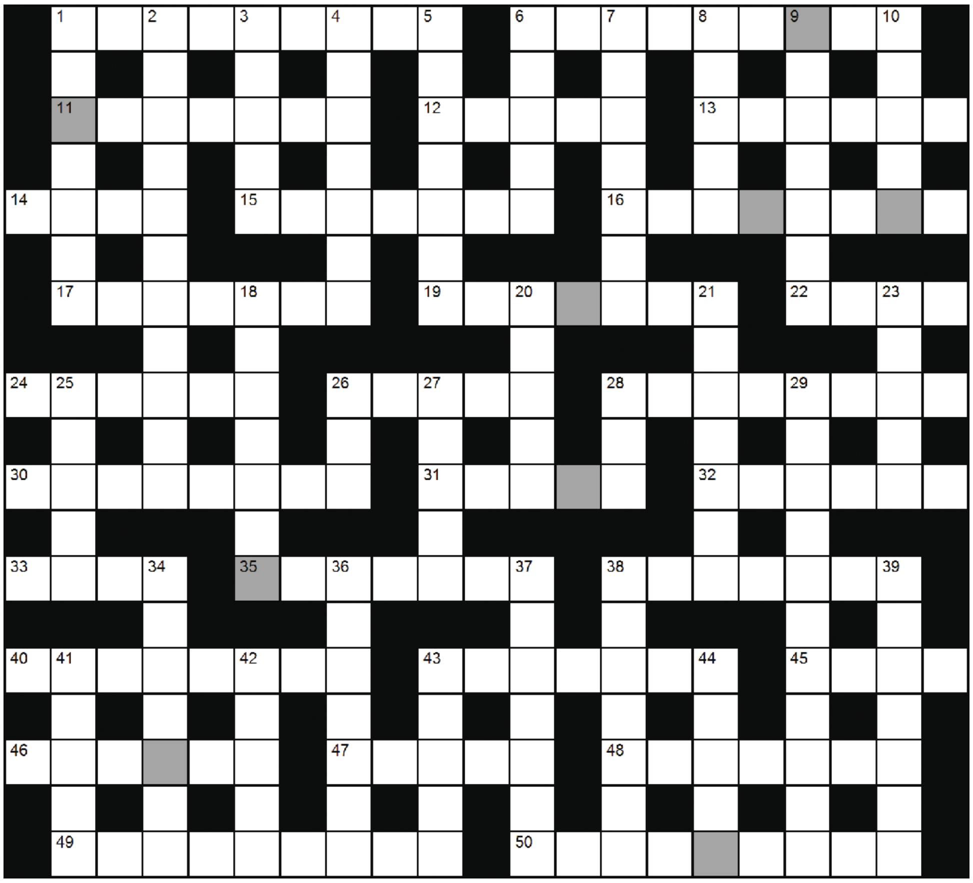
Christmas crossword



ACROSS

1/22 Name of hosta with ridged, white-edged leaves – which has presents at its base? (9,4)

6 Kiwi fruit genus (9)

11 What a happy setter may do for a yellow-flowering rhododendron! (7)

12 Southern moralistic type's bit of holly? (5)

13 Mound of soil and a cart to carry it (6)

14 Succulent plant inserts oxygen in beer (4)

15 Is inside badly split female flower parts (7)

16 Shrub rose with pink, pompon flowers – Christmas tree topping? (3,5)

17 Plant support: grape twisted around centre of pole (7)

19 Open to the elements, seed pox dispersed (7)

22 See 1 across

24 In which plants benefit from fermenting manure (possibly both – Ed) (6)

26 Cereal plant needs start of good, wet weather (5)

28 Decorative kitchen gardens' pears got damaged (8)

30 Brass instrument taken by Ray for tree of *Carpinus* genus (8)

31 Fungal disease affecting buds – curse! (5)

32 Basal part of leaf surrounding stem… in RHS heather (6)

33 Dig around in soil for caterpillar, say (4)

35 Organic? It's intuitive! (7)

38 Like the common garden iris, a bedder maybe (7)

40 Karl, renowned German plantsman – in favour of including variety of trees (8)

43 Christmas tree sheddings – gets under someone's skin! (7)

45 A gem of a wine-red clematis (4)

46 Part of basil I call a white mineral substance (6)

47 Shrivel with heat – *Larix* tree needs a different top (5)

48 Woodland plant among henbane, moneywort (7)

49 Plant got for a few smackers at Christmas? (9)

50 Southern US coin not so much as most hibiscuses are (9)

DOWN

1 *Primula veris* makes Daisy tumble? (7)

2 A *Lychnis* with frayed petals – scruffy Christmas card character! (6,5)

3 Having a point, like the flavour of crab apple tart? (5)

4 Yours truly confused sisal for lemon balm genus (7)

5 Stalkless… part of irises, silenes (7)

6 Paracress covers large areas of land (5)

7 African marigolds eg taste horrible! (7)

8 __ fir: stately Christmas tree that retains 43 across (5)

9 'Resting', as eg nerines are in summer (7)

10 French love this large red-flowering begonia! (5)

18 Affectionate style of address for a legume past its sell-by date? (3,4)

20 Dwarf azalea with pure white flowers – bamboo-devouring species! (5)

21 'False hemp' genus aids cat reproduction (7)

23 18th-century German botanical illustrator – there about (5)

25 Smell – from orchids, initially, grim! (5)

26 See 44 down

27 Pale-yellow *Clematis chiisanensis* (RHS 2016 winner) – 'Traffic light' (5)

28 Cannabis container? (3)

29 *Viburnum opulus* aka snowball tree (7,4)

34 Puts in the ground, we hear, holly etc fruits (7)

36 Fungal disease of acers found in Gibraltar's potatoes (3,4)

37 Blood-sucking worms – fifty on topless *Fagus* trees! (7)

38 White-edged, pink tulip: label 'DA' variety (7)

39 They pointedly make holes for seeds, etc (7)

41 Narcotic produce of *Papaver somniferum* (5)

42 Grow like a creeper… or stalk (5)

43 Eg a shrub that protects a young plant – state enrolled? (5)

44/26 Geums we modified with time, producing *Liquidambar* plant (5,3)

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DOWN: 2 PORTULACA **3** NEEDLED **4** ITEAS **6** CAREX **7** BANKSIA **8** RHEUM **9** INFLORESCENCE **16** NEL **17** GNU **18** EVERGREEN **20** HOT LIPS **22** STEMMED **24** EIDER **25** WATER **26** YUCCA.

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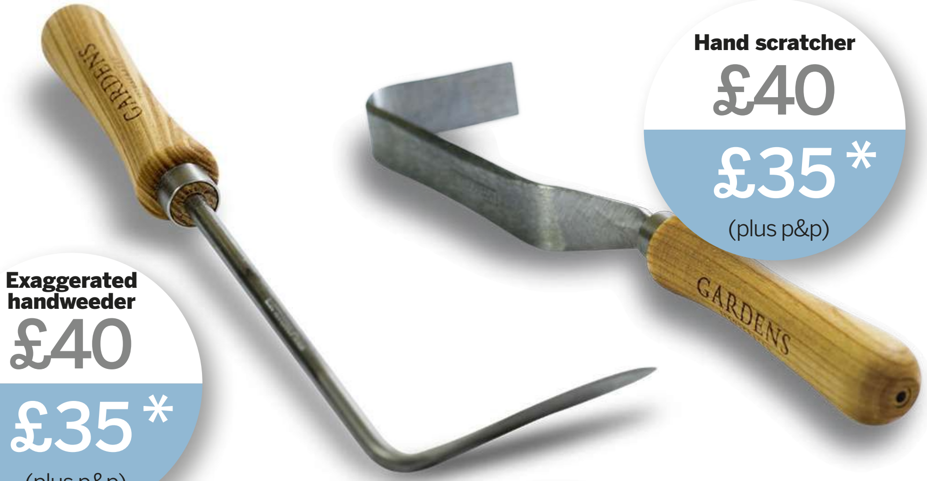

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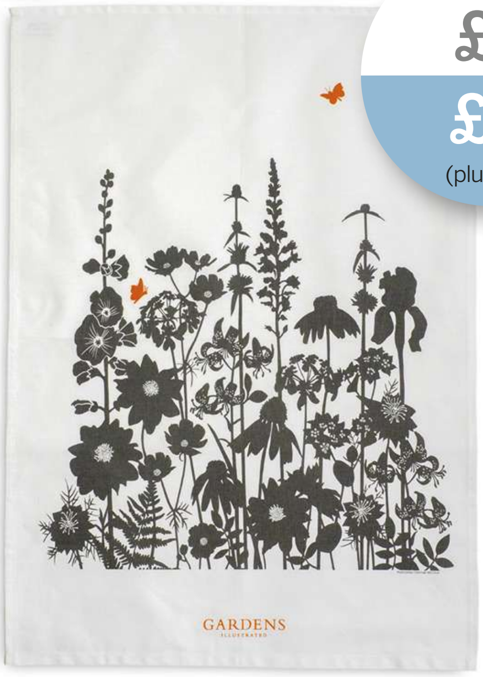

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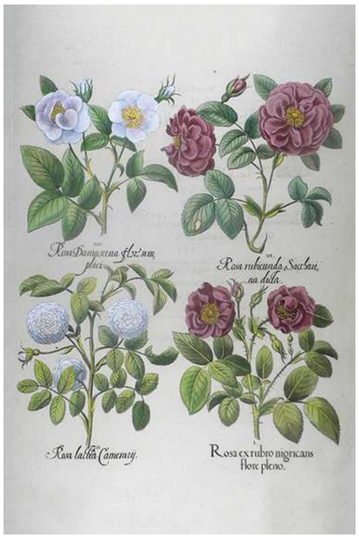
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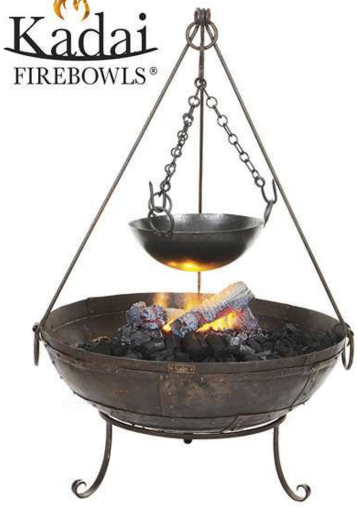

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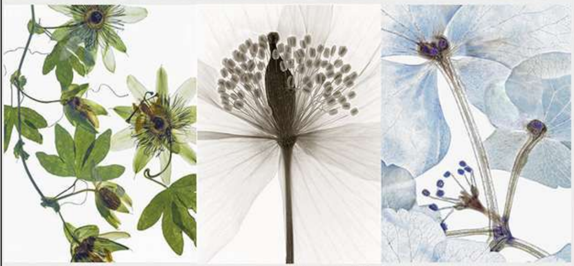

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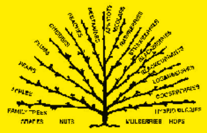

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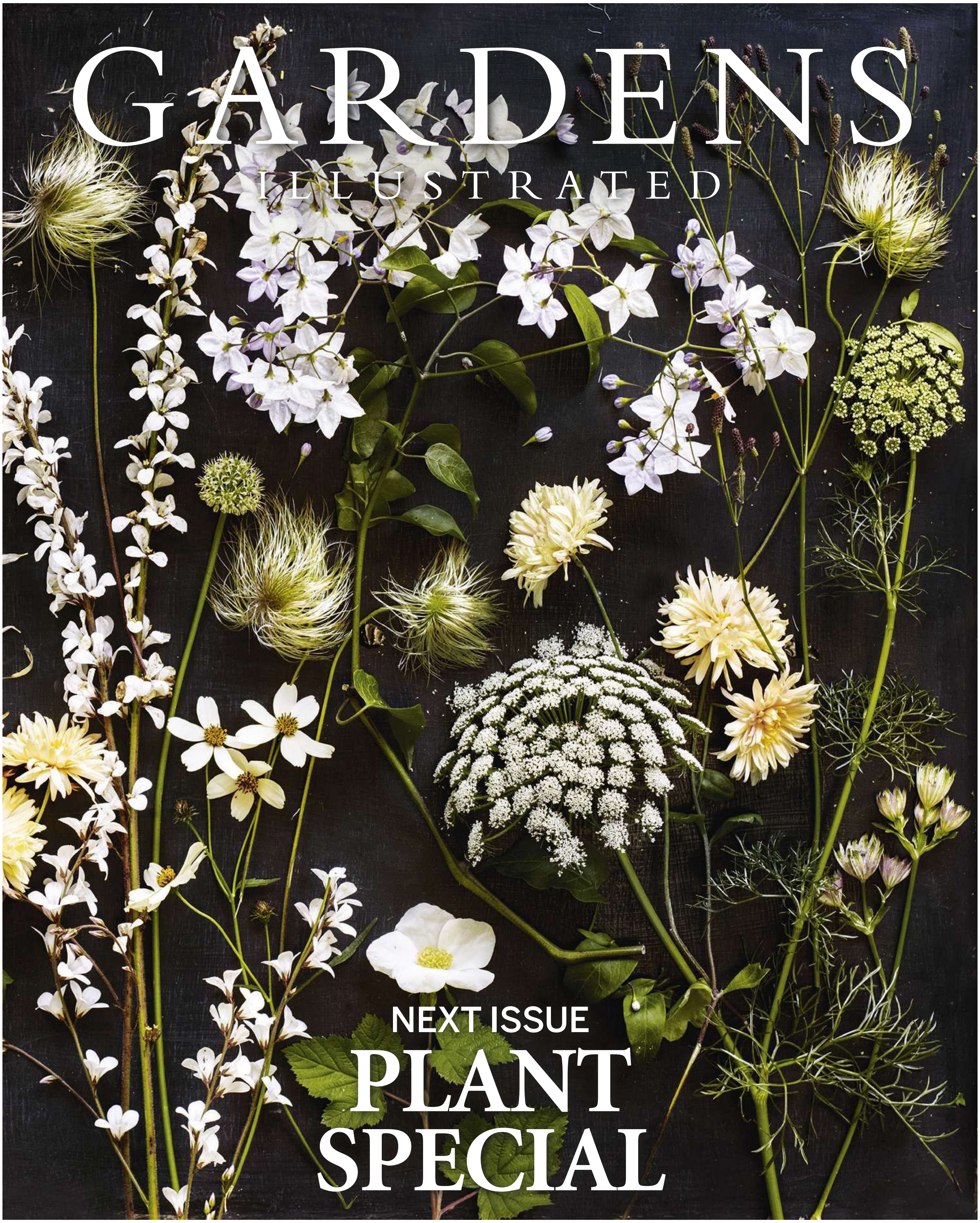

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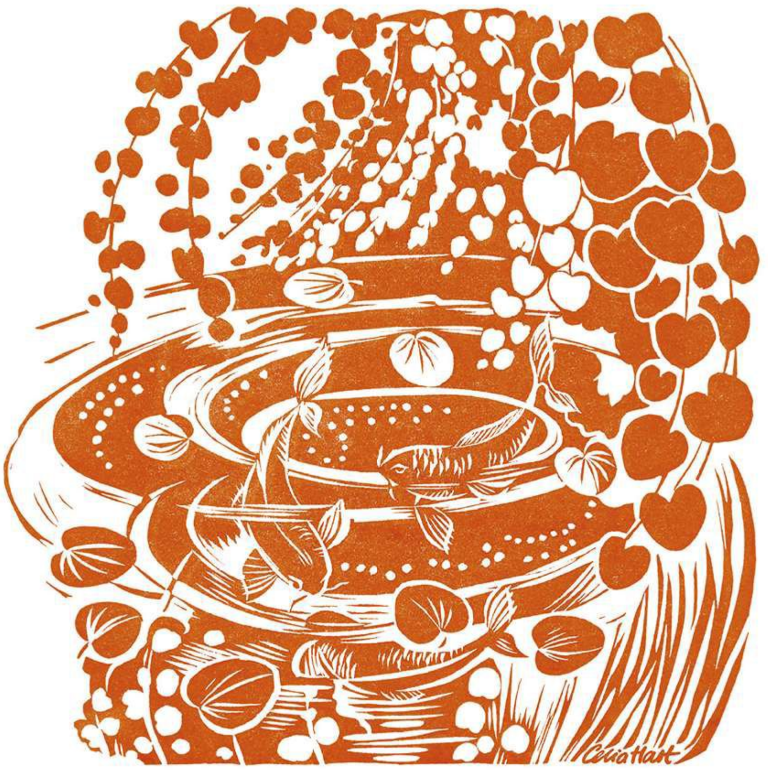
A crying shame

Why, wonders Frank, do we see so few weeping trees in gardens these days? Have we all been blinded to their magnificence by an unhappy association with the S word?

WORDS **FRANK RONAN** ILLUSTRATION **CELIA HART**



One day the Cercidiphyllum *will brush the pond's edge with burnt caramel tresses. But at the moment it is unhappy*

Lachrymosity is possibly not a subject for the festive month but, riled by a recent conversation, it is impossible for me to let the year go without defending it. A good friend, during a slightly demi-mondaine luncheon (where I was a vicarious attendant), was asking where he could get a copper beech to help populate his new and unwieldy hillside garden. I said that, if he were growing it as a tree, a weeping form would be better, whereupon the woman of slight acquaintance at our elbows sniffed and uttered the one word that was the most damning in her vocabulary: Suburban.

Luckily for her I was sober, and restricted my response to asking whether she had ever seen a weeping copper beech full grown? She, having reached the limits of her prejudice, pretended not to hear and left for elbows new, before I could follow by saying that I had only ever seen them in grand parks on great estates; that a well grown specimen would be larger than the average suburban garden, and anyway why wasn't the cuprousity alone enough to trigger her condemnation? Why so rough on the weeping?

Well grown, well placed weeping trees are seldom seen, but can be thrilling when they are. Weeping willows are the exception that you might see everywhere, and that may be the source of the suburban prejudice. I don't spend enough time in the suburbs to tire of them and am still pleasantly engaged whenever I see a good one. While I don't have room for the full version, nor the sort of garden where it would look well, I hope not to be so small minded to think that they cannot shine in other places.

Still, why would you let your jadedness with one species blind you to the charm of all weeping things? I have a twisted willow in the damp back corner of a border that I had as a cutting from a friend who kept it cropped, so that I never knew that, at a certain height, the branches would descend like crazy Shirley Temple ringlets. It is just the thing to set off a ponderous *Gunnera* below.

The other weeper in the garden, and the only one intentionally planted, is a *Cercidiphyllum*. It is five yards from the corner of the pond in the expectation that one day it will brush the edge with burnt caramel tresses. But at the moment it is unhappy. I hope it is only that it found last summer confusing and that next year will see it right, but am afraid that the Siberian iris I put in to be its friend has taken advantage. If it doesn't perk up this spring there will be an intervention on the side of the weeper.

But if I had the space I would have a weeping copper beech – a mountain of shining purple leaves on a bit of rugged slopey ground. I don't even know if there would be enough time left for me to see it in glory. They grow slower, these weepers, having to go down as well as up. And have you ever seen a mature weeping ash? That is a sight worth putting your boots on for. And weeping birches can be pretty good. And we haven't even touched on the conifers which, being already melancholy, give Niobe a run for her money – there is a superb *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* 'Dik's Weeping' gracing one of the least suburban gardens I can think of.

So let's fight this suburban nonsense. Plants, or forms of plants, are good or bad in themselves, and their fashion in the suburbs is accidental. Weeping trees can be magnificent, and maybe they look particularly good with buildings and over water, but those of us who choose to live in the country love our houses and our ponds as much as anyone. If you were thinking of buying a tree for someone this Christmas, consider the weeping option. It might be a better present. □

Frank Ronan is a novelist who gardens in both the UK and USA.

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